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THE GLORY

AND

THE SHAME OF BRITAIN.

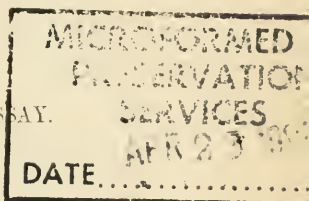
An Essay

ON THE CONDITION AND CLAIMS OF
THE WORKING CLASSES,

TOGETHER

WITH THE MEANS OF SECURING THEIR ELEVATION.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.



Servants, labourers, and workmen of different kinds, make up the far greater part of every great political society. But what improves the circumstances of the greater part, can never be regarded as any inconveniency to the whole. No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.— *Wealth of Nations*, book i. ch. 8.

What a fool (quoth he) am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise.— *Pilgrim's Progress*.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;

AND SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

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1851

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INTRODUCTION.

THE circumstances which have led to the publication of the following Essay are briefly these:— In the year 1849, the Committee of the Religious Tract Society offered two prizes of 100*l.* and 50*l.* respectively, for the best and second best Essays on “The present condition of the manufacturing and other working classes, so far as the same is affected by moral causes and personal character and habits, together with the best means of promoting their temporal and spiritual welfare.” Having frequently been brought into contact with the classes in question, the author’s attention was powerfully drawn towards the subject: he finally resolved to transmit his thoughts respecting it for competition, and subsequently had the gratification of being informed that his Essay had been honoured with the first prize.

The author trusts he will not be thought wanting in the diffidence appropriate to one who asks for the first time the hearing of the public, if from motives of deference to the auspices by which his request is sanctioned, he waives those apologetic remarks which he might otherwise deem necessary. Gladly availing himself of the circumstances which, if they do not impose silence, render it at least graceful, he would beg merely to add a preliminary sentence or two in reference to the subject which he has ventured to treat. When this discussion was first invited, various causes contributed to invest it with special interest. Recent political events, the depression of trade, the effects of famine, and the impending scourge of cholera, all combined to throw into bold relief the state of our working population, and roused the middle and upper classes to unwonted enthusiasm on their behalf. Those causes have for the present ceased to operate, but it would be folly to suppose that the evils they forced into temporary notice have become extinct. We are now enjoying an interval of comparative prosperity; popular sensibilities are no longer fretted by the rumours of foreign insurrections; generally speaking, the artisan has plenty of work, his children are well fed, and political grievances are in abeyance. Still the state of things is essentially

unchanged, the core of the evil is untouched. There is as much improvidence, ignorance, and irreligion among the masses now as at any past period. That signs of improvement are apparent is joyfully conceded; but the only change worth speaking of has yet to be brought about, and must be secured by the patient, united, and well-directed toils of half a century. The author cannot hope that everything he has written will be so fortunate as to meet with the approval of the reader; he trusts, however, that as his sentiments are expressed with honesty, they will be received with candour, and prove the means, in some humble measure, of hastening the fulfilment of the cherished schemes of patriotism and piety.

HENRY DUNCKLEY.

PENDLETON, MANCHESTER.



THE GLORY

AND

THE SHAME OF BRITAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

WE propose to take, in the present essay, a brief but comprehensive view of the condition of the working classes of this country ; to consider the means which are necessary to secure their elevation, and to contemplate the motives which ought to engage all ranks in endeavouring to attain that object.

The condition of the working classes presents us with three distinct and leading topics of inquiry. They are the subjects of certain wants, in the satisfying of which their temporal well-being consists ; they are members of a commonwealth whose prosperity depends upon the mutual sympathy of its several parts ; and they are placed beneath a spiritually remedial dispensation for the due improvement of which they are responsible to God. Thus, in a three-fold view, they are clothed with the highest interest. It is natural to inquire whether their present necessities are supplied with that measure of ease and regularity which is consistent with the due

expansion of their bodily and mental powers ; whether the social principles which prevail among them are such as will conduce to the safety and happiness of the state ; and whether the reception they have given to the glorious gospel is such as will secure them an interest in its saving blessings, and promote the further extension of Christianity. It will be our aim in the present chapter to afford the means of satisfying these inquiries We propose—

I. To review their personal and domestic condition, pointing out as we proceed the circumstances which chiefly affect its welfare.

II. To illustrate the position they occupy in relation to society as at present constituted, examining the correctness of the sentiments they entertain respecting it.

III. To present an estimate of the views they hold in reference to the claims of Christianity, analysing them into their constituent elements, and tracing those elements to their respective sources in the training of the individual, or the influences of social life.

I. In reviewing the general condition of the working man, we will first inquire into his PERSONAL CHARACTER AND HABITS.

It is here we must find the clue to everything which concerns him. Generally speaking, he is what he makes himself. If we walk through the factory, converse at random with the men among the spindles, and then follow them home, we shall find their domestic comforts nearly in the ratio of their intelligence. Knowledge is light and power ; it discloses worthy ends, and points out the best means of attaining them. It is impossible

for a thoughtful man to rest satisfied with a wretched home ; a furnished mind will soon show its existence in a furnished house, and refined tastes will reflect themselves in cleanliness and comfort.

Discrimination is very necessary in forming an estimate of the character and habits of the working man. Unqualified statements of any kind would be erroneous. The most favourable and unfavourable assertions might equally challenge support from facts. Lord Brougham was unquestionably right in saying that "among our journeymen mechanics are to be found the most respectable, the most ingenious, the most skilful, and the most valuable members of the community." As was recently asserted before a committee on public libraries of the House of Commons, it would be easy to select men from the forge or the loom who are fully equal in point of intelligence to the best read among the middle classes. But it is equally true that the number of those to whom such statements can apply is very small. They are immeasurably the exception. "Not one in twenty of the men at work yonder," said an intelligent mechanic the other day, pointing from his shop to a mill where five hundred operatives are employed, "could converse sensibly on any topic at the slightest remove from their daily avocations." For every operative whose shelf contains the productions of our classic authors, at least twenty could be adduced who never heard their names. It is our happiness to be acquainted with working men who could discuss intelligently the doctrines of Locke, and who spend their evenings in reading at their own fire-side some of the chief writers of the day, and with others who spend their leisure time in perfecting, on

their own piano, the performance of "Judas Maccabæus." These are *really* working men, not earning more than eighteen or twenty shillings a-week ; but then, they are emphatically lights in a dark place, the hill-tops which are tipped with the rising sun, while the valleys on all sides are covered with clouds.

There are several simple tests by which we can form a tolerably correct judgment respecting a man's mental character. We look first at the general arrangements of his dwelling, certain that, apart altogether from its affluence or poverty, they will furnish us with obvious marks from which we may infer the presence or absence of a cultivated mind. We ask next whether he is able to read, and if so, what kind of reading yields him most interest. But above all we note the character of his amusements, assured that the occupations which employ the mind in its lighter moments, afford the clearest insight into its condition. Let us apply these tests to the case before us.

With respect to the *domestic arrangements* of the working classes, while, in many instances, the amount of comfort they enjoy fully equals, if it does not exceed, what we might expect from their pecuniary resources, it must be confessed that in the majority it falls far below that standard. Many a man in the regular receipt of good wages, has a home into which decency can scarcely venture. Neither taste, order, nor even cleanliness, has a place in it. The light can hardly force its way through its dirty windows ; it would be impossible to guess the original colour of its walls and furniture, so covered are they with a common dinginess ; while chairs and tables are always crowded with con-

fused heaps of articles which completely usurp their proper uses.

We may be guided in estimating the degree of intelligence they possess by the state of their dwellings. A tendency to indulge in pictorial representation is widely spread among them. This, indeed, is one of the forms in which the primitive taste of the human mind exhibits itself. It is found among the most savage tribes, always growing in accuracy with the growth of knowledge. What then is the state of the artistic faculty among the working classes? In general it is very rude, unable to distinguish a daub from a painting; scarcely deserving a higher place than that observed among the aboriginal tribes at the sources of the Mississippi. Quaintly emblematical representations of the seasons, a page from some antiquated fashion-book, or perhaps the queen and her royal consort emblazoned with all the glory which red and yellow can bestow, are among the ordinary specimens of their pictorial taste. Such things are trivial in themselves, but they are unequivocal signs of a certain stage of mental development.

In inquiring how far the working classes are able to *read*, we will not insult them by an appeal to criminal statistics, believing that those statistics cannot be taken as indicative of their general intellectual condition. Sufficiently approximate data may be gleaned from the returns of the Registrar-General. From these we gather that, of the operative population, about one-half of the men and two-thirds of the women are unable to write their names. This, it is true, relates to writing, but there are good reasons for believing that the ability to read is not much more extensive; at least, where the

two are not associated, the latter is a merely mechanical ability to spell out a few words, and attach a dubious meaning to a few common sentences, instead of that large and facile power which alone deserves the name. It is the misfortune of statistics that they fix the attention on quantity rather than quality. They tell that so many persons possess a certain accomplishment, but they fail to tell us to what extent they possess it. This must be kept in mind in every attempt to estimate the intellectual condition of the masses, for large as is the proportion of those who cannot read, the proportion of those who would be unable to make out intelligently a single page of a classic author is probably much larger. In an adult class formed for the purpose of Biblical instruction, it is generally found that at least one-half are unable to read the inspired text with any approach to facility. Still, a considerable number of readers, in the better sense of the word, are found among the working classes.

The next question therefore is, what *kind of reading* affords them the most interest? This question will be decided if we can ascertain what kind of books they spend their money in purchasing. The information given on this point by the largest provincial bookseller in England, Mr. Abel Heywood, of Manchester, whose business lies chiefly among the working classes, is very important. The issue of trash from his establishment is thirty times greater than that of works of average excellence. The publications constituting the larger class are beneath criticism, while their morality is still worse. They are sold chiefly in the form of penny pamphlets; usually the first page is half covered with a miserably

executed wood-cut, representing some coarsely tragic scene. The character of those engravings deserves special notice, giving, as it does, such a clue to the condition of those to whom they can minister gratification. They are disgustingly tragic, the tragedy lying not in sentiment, but in gross sensualism, in the inflicting of so many wounds, and the loss of so much blood. Their contents are in perfect keeping, just as the interior of a penny show corresponds to the pictorial horrors depicted outside. The scaffolding of every tale is much the same. Without any attempt at caricature it might be said that in most cases it runs thus,—“Clifford loves Clara, so does Belmont: Belmont kills Clifford, and himself falls a victim to revenge; while Clara either retires to a convent, or poisons herself in despair.” It is wonderful how the greatest variety of villany can succeed in imparting freshness to such a uniformity of plot, and still more so that human nature, in its most degraded state, should not refuse with loathing such tainted food. What must be the intellectual and moral condition of those persons who can give their time and money to such productions; and under such developing influences what must they ultimately become!

The *amusements* in which men choose to indulge are among the most significant signs of their personal condition. As an index to the mental character, whatever is spontaneous is best; the mind is seen most accurately in a careless mood. The amusements of the working classes are an order of phenomena which have not received due attention. They are not capable of being illustrated by facts which are statistically ascertained, we must appeal instead to such as are open to

common observation. The lowest order of popular amusements are such as we find connected with village wakes. They are degrading to the last degree. We blush for humanity in referring to them. On such occasions a spectator might see a pole erected, duly greased and sooted, with a hat or a joint of mutton at the top, the prize of the successful climber. Presently a number of young females present themselves, indecently clothed, to run for a paltry gown-piece. A dozen men come next, tied to the neck in sacks, "jumping for a goose," or else, with their hands tied behind them, trying which shall first catch it in his mouth. What shall we say of the boasted triumphs of civilization, when, midway in the nineteenth century, such scenes can be suffered to take place in an English county town? How can the working man expect to be respected if he does not raise his voice in their condemnation?

Another order of amusement consists of those sports which spring from training and exercising the instincts of the lower animals. In past times, a love of field-sports was a conspicuous element in our national character. Our patrician forefathers delighted in hawking and the chase, and many of their descendants still find their element on the race-ground or the steeple-course. Parallel with these amusements among the working classes were those of cock-fighting and bull-baiting. These have nearly died away; not so, however, the tastes which produced them. The sentiments of the more refined portion of the community suppressed those sports, but there are others equally degrading in which the same feelings find expression. One of the most prominent of these is the

practice of the dog-fancier. In manufacturing towns this is carried on to a remarkable extent. We have been told of instances in which men suffered their families to want bread, while their dogs were well clothed and regularly fed. The wagers sometimes ventured upon them in a trial of speed are comparatively enormous, rising to as much as twenty or thirty pounds.¹ We recently fell upon a group of factory operatives to the number of three or four hundred, who had been brought together simply for the purpose of witnessing a dog race. It was truly painful to witness the earnestness they threw into the sport, as contrasted with its degrading littleness. Three hundred immortal souls sunk so low as to be capable of feasting themselves on such a petty exhibition of brute force! Three golden hours a-piece, or more than two months of precious working-time, wasted in grovelling amusement! What *might* have been done in that time! How much knowledge gained! How large an addition made to all the elements of respectability previously existing among the working classes! But what must have been the mental condition of the men?—this is the saddest thought.

The highest order of popular amusements consists of those which derive their interest from musical or dramatic performances. These are more expensive; they appeal, at least professedly, to sentiment, and require some degree of taste and information for their enjoyment. Their character and pretensions are extremely various, extending from the common saloon to the

(1) In reply to inquiries made in several quarters, we are assured that the "stakes" ventured in a dog race, made up, be it remembered, by the lowest grade of factory operatives, often amount to 50*l.*, while a large field is regularly hired for the season, for the convenience of the "sport."

metropolitan theatres, with their vaunted array of histrionic talent. With respect to the theatre, its ancient pretensions are notoriously exploded. The great lights of dramatic literature are extinguished. Shakspeare is driven from the stage, and finds his warmest admirers among those who never venture into the theatre. Drivelling sentimentalism and the coarsest buffoonery hold equal sway within those walls whither we were once directed to go in search of exalted taste, and for initiation in every moral virtue. The professed play-goer is now, by general consent, a man for whose intelligence and taste we require the lowest fractional expression.

The saloon has now a wider influence than the theatre, and is a growing instrument of mischief. It accommodates itself to all the vicious elements which exist in the bosom of a large town, and panders with little disguise to the most sensual passions. The saloons are places where men can get drunk to music, where the depraved of the one sex may most conveniently meet with the abandoned of the other, and where those acquaintances and assignations may be made which ruin virtue. These dens of iniquity abound in our large manufacturing towns. We know one which has been recently opened on a large scale, the building alone involving a rental of six hundred pounds per annum. Pitiable is it to see its contents disgorged about midnight; a motley group, in which, among rakes and prostitutes, it is too easy to recognise a large number belonging to the rising population of the factory.

Besides these saloons it is common for public-houses to have their musical performances on sabbath evenings.

In order to be tolerated by the public, it is given out that they consist entirely of sacred pieces, though on notorious evidence they are plentifully interspersed with profane songs. Some conception of the medley of which they consist may be gained from the fact, that the keeper of such a place of entertainment, when summoned before the magistrates of Rochdale to answer for disturbances which had taken place at one of his sabbath evening concerts, alleged in his defence that they were always closed by "singing the doxology."

From facts of which these are but a few specimens gleaned by individual experience, we have to infer the character and habits of the working man. That the inference to be drawn from them is far from universal, we gladly admit. As we stated at the beginning of these remarks, there are gradations among the working classes which it would be highly unjust to confound. If we might compare those gradations with others which exist in society at large, we should distinguish the working classes into an aristocratic, a middle, and a lowest class. To the first of these the observations we have made by no means apply. They are intelligent, industrious, refined, and religious; their homes are the abodes of comfort; they would feel as much out of their element in the amusements just described as any set of men whatever. Our observations apply exclusively to the middle and lowest classes of our operative population—classes by far the most numerous, and on whose behalf our philanthropy is chiefly roused. These we may designate, without injustice—not in anger, but in pity—ignorant, sensual, unreflecting, wretched, destitute of fixed principles, knowing nothing of the past,

unblessed with the faintest ray of science, proficient in nothing but the impure technicalities of the workshop and the ale-house, looking upon society as a chaos of chance or fraud, regarding death itself with no higher emotion than brutal fear. Such is the personal character of thousands who inhabit this civilized land ! Such is the foundation on which the fabric of domestic virtue must be reared !

From the personal character and habits of the working classes it is easy to transfer our thoughts to their DOMESTIC CONDITION. The former stand to the latter in the relation of cause and effect. Personal character may justly be regarded as the spring of all success in life. Success depends upon the cultivation of the bodily and mental powers—how then can it be attained by the man who is abandoned to sensuality ? Success depends upon the kindly help of others ; but to whom are men most ready to extend a helping hand if not to those who are able to grasp it ? Success depends upon esteem ; but esteem is never cherished for ignorance and incapacity. Let but a high standard of moral and intellectual excellence be aimed at, and all the elements of temporal prosperity will in time combine to crown the attempt. That influences of an unfavourable kind are in operation, which the working man is unable wholly to avert, candour at once obliges us to admit. These, as they occur in the course of this inquiry, shall be pointed out, and impartially considered. Still it is true, that the secret of his domestic condition, and generally of his success or failure in the business of life, reposes solely with himself. The influence of personal

character is strikingly exhibited in the domestic condition of the working classes. In reviewing that condition, we will take as our guides the chief influences which act upon it, as they spring from income, expenditure, and the state of the family relations.

Foremost among the circumstances which determine the domestic condition of the working man must be placed the *rate and regularity of wages*. In a highly civilized community, where every inch of soil has its owner, and the division of labour is carried to its furthest extent, no article can be had without money, and money can only be acquired by the working man in exchange for his toil. Wages, therefore, represent his entire ability to purchase the comforts and necessaries of life ; they constitute (simple truth, but one too often forgotten !) the only barrier between him and absolute starvation.

If wages are the only means of support which a working man possesses, the *rate of wages* is a thing of the utmost moment. Nothing which is exclusively temporal in its nature could possibly be fraught with more important consequences. Upon this it depends whether he is able to supply himself with comforts, or is forced to languish in want—whether he is able to purchase warm and decent clothing, rent a healthy house, indulge himself, now and then, with necessary recreation, provide for himself the means of intellectual improvement, educate his children, and start them suitably in life ; or whether he is obliged to go in rags, live in a cellar, pass his life in an unvarying monotony of toil, study no book but the book of nature, and tax the very childhood of his children with the burden of

self-support. It is a weighty thought, and one which is commended by the strongest considerations to philanthropy and justice, that according as wages fluctuate, the poor man may live in comfort, or must pine in misery.

This thought, clear enough to be seen by all classes, the working man has been *made* to apprehend. Accordingly, the rate of wages is a matter on which he is most solicitous, and his chief anxiety is to keep it from being depressed. In endeavouring to secure this object he is sometimes injudicious. From ignorance of the laws which regulate the rate of wages he often attempts what is scientifically impossible, and attempts it in such a way as to aggravate rather than mend his condition. The practice of *strikes*, to which we here allude, has no tendency to raise wages. Labour is the workman's property, which he has a right to dispose of to the best advantage; but strikes are imprudent, or strictly speaking, absurd. Most of the working classes were in favour of the legislative measure which avowed the principle of free-trade, but no free-trader can be a consistent upholder of strikes. Protective duties and combinations for raising the price of labour must stand or fall together. If the producer comes into the market with goods enough to supply the ordinary demand of six purchasers, and finds twelve waiting for him, he will evidently sell to advantage; within certain limits he will be able to dictate the terms of the bargain. But if, on bringing into the market goods enough for the supply of twelve consumers, the market furnishes only six, it is equally evident that the advantage lies with them, and that he must either keep his goods, or sell them at a reduced rate. In the same

way the price of every article is determined by the proportions of supply and demand : if the supply is less than the demand the price rises ; if greater, the price falls. Labour is no exception to this rule. The workman is a producer—labour is the commodity he brings into the market, and the price it will fetch depends upon the number of purchasers. “ When two men run after one master wages fall ; they rise when two masters run after one workman.” If, therefore, strikes can raise wages, it is because they are able either to diminish the supply of labour, or increase the demand for it. But they cannot do either. Nothing but an increase of capital can increase the demand for labour, and capital can only increase by means of labour—the very article which strikes place under restrictions, and thus render more difficult of purchase. Capital can employ more labour only as it is productive ; but strikes withhold from it the very means by which alone it can be made productive, the marketable use of labour. Thus strikes have a tendency to diminish rather than increase the demand for labour, and so far to lower rather than to raise the rate of wages. Neither are they able to diminish the supply of labour in the market, for that supply can only be diminished by annihilating the labourer, or purchasing his labour, neither of which is it pretended that strikes can do. Besides, strikes generally fail, ultimately they always must ; but whether they fail or not, the workman is always a loser. He loses five or six weeks’ wages ; he loses the money spent in maintaining the combination—money which is often distributed with a lavish, if not dishonest hand, among a crowd of idlers and placemen ; he taxes himself

perhaps for years to pay the debts contracted while out of work ; and finally he is cheated of the promised advantages of the strike, masters, freed from its apprehensions, and knowing that their men are absolutely unable to support another, returning to their old prices. In theory, strikes are utterly untenable ; in practice, they are commonly an ingenious device by which the honourable man is made the dupe of his designing colleagues.

These remarks are made with an exclusive reference to the practice of strikes as bearing on an advance of wages. That the relation which subsists between the employer and the employed is capable of no amelioration we are far from denying. We shall hereafter have occasion to show that capital has its duties, and that the fulfilment of those duties may be enforced by very different methods from those which have ordinarily been pursued. Still, should the workman be disposed to repine, it may be useful for him to reflect that he does not stand alone. All sections of the community are bound by the same law. He cannot afford to hold back his labour in expectation of higher prices ; but neither can the tradesman hold back his wares, the grazier his cattle, nor the farmer his corn. The great bulk of the community are forced to sell at current prices. Nor can we doubt that this arrangement is upon the whole beneficial. It is easy to foresee that an opposite one would lead to universal dearth, and end in the ruin of all social interests.

The *regularity* is of almost equal importance with the *rate* of wages. In the vast majority of cases, the rate of wages is sufficient for subsistence ; in many it

will include comforts and even luxuries ; but in few will it suffice for more. Besides, either from imprudence or necessity, the working man not only lives up to the full amount of his income, but lives on it in advance ; mortgaging for this week's subsistence the wages he expects to receive at the close. Hence, whatever interferes with the regularity of wages, is a serious drawback to his happiness, often involving him in embarrassments from which he cannot extricate himself for years.

One of the chief circumstances which affect the regularity of wages is *the fickleness of the workman*. This is seen chiefly in large towns. In villages and small towns, there is no choice of masters ; if a man leaves his present employer he is generally obliged to remove elsewhere ; consequently, no slight motive will induce him to abandon a place of regular work. On the other hand, the facilities offered in large towns for renewed employment, are apt to make a workman imagine himself independent, and tempt him to throw up his place at a small provocation, or with a very slender chance of gaining a better. Many families have suffered in consequence of this. We knew one case in which a man threw himself and several sons out of employ, sold his furniture, and went to the other side of the kingdom, allured by a trifling advance of wages. In a few months, the bubble burst, and he was back again with his old master. Soon afterwards a similar bait was offered, and again seized. Again he and his family left the town, and in a few months they were back again, begging to be readmitted to their former situations. As on two occasions they had shown no desire to consult their employer's interest, he was in no haste to consult theirs.

He took them, finally, a third time into his employ, but not till they had been out of work for a considerable time, and had contracted debts which they would not easily repay. Such changes are common ; they are often made from a not unreasonable desire of improvement ; the prospect of easier work, kinder treatment, or better wages is a tempting bait. But let the working man remember the proverb which fixes the comparative worth of "a bird in the hand." Many persons in the higher departments of labour deem it prudent to suffer privations rather than give up the advantages of a fixed income. Those petty annoyances which selfishness inflicts on others, are not peculiar to the lot of the working classes ; on the contrary, they have to be borne by persons of every rank in life, and will cease only when the hearts of men are brought under the influences of religion.

Another practice which interrupts the regularity of wages is the very common one of indulging in *periodical seasons of dissipation*. Time is money, and the man who wastes it is the worst of all spendthrifts. He squanders that precious gold which God has coined and made current, and by which alone the demands of the soul and body can be met. If railways, the electric telegraph, and similar inventions, are valuable chiefly because they economize time, what an expensive thing is idleness ! A day a-week seems a trifling thing to lose, and yet it involves the loss of a sixth part of our national wealth. It would be madness for a capitalist to throw every sixth guinea into the sea, for a farmer to commit every sixth quarter of wheat to the flames, or for a manufacturer to consign to the stoker every sixth bale

of cotton which reaches him from New Orleans ; and yet such acts would be quite as rational as the practice of spending every sixth day in dissipation. How many operatives act as if the end of the week brought with it a release from the obligations and cares of existence ! How many, after allotting a bare half of their wages to domestic claims, abandon their workshops and their homes till an empty pocket compels them to return ! By such conduct their lives are voluntarily rendered a constant battle for existence, a daily struggle with extreme and ever-recurring evils. Dividing their time between a degree of labour which would task a slave, and scenes of dissipation which would debase a savage, they know nothing of the independence which springs from a regular income, and the equable enjoyments of the sober man. Life, in their experience, is a whirlwind, a cataract, a precarious foothold on the margin of a cliff, from whence they are daily in danger of being tumbled into the gulf below.

The domestic condition of the working classes depends primarily upon the rate and regularity of wages ; but money is only a means, and can secure domestic comfort only as it is *laid out well*. Hence the *mode of expenditure* employed, as well as the amount of their income, is an important point to be ascertained. There is no difficulty in stating the rules which ought to guide the expenditure of wages. The chief is, that they should be rigidly apportioned to the necessities of each demand, or, at least, that they be spread pretty evenly through the entire week. If this be violated, nothing can save the working man from domestic wretchedness. His family fare will consist alternately

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of a feast and a fast—gluttony one day will be avenged by want the next ; physical and moral evils of the worst kind will ensue, till at length confirmed sensuality destroys both body and soul.

Without impugning the intentions of the working classes, it may be questioned whether they have generally acquired a thorough mastery of domestic economics. They have not yet acquired the power of standing with stern vigilance over the family purse. Too often the want which is merely the first in point of time is that which is first relieved. The pocket responds in chronological order to every demand made upon it, till further response is impossible. There is no arbitrating between interfering claims, no preference of the greater to the less, no postponement of an inferior gratification because a homelier want is more pressing, no acquaintance, in short, with that arithmetic of life which must be gained by all who wish to avoid the gazette or the union-house. It is at length beginning to be understood that the welfare of nations depends less upon their armies than the state of their exchequer, and a similar maxim is true of the humblest household in the land.

The chief *faults which vitiate the expenditure* of the working classes are two ; *needless outlay*, and *unsound remedies*. Intoxicating drinks present us with a striking instance of the former. In a heavily-taxed country, the voluntarily tax for the purchase of noxious beverages exceeds the sum of all the taxes paid into the exchequer. So large is this item of social expenditure, that the saving involved in a general adoption of the principle of total abstinence would be equivalent to an entire repeal of taxation, or the extinction, in sixteen years, of

the national debt. The people of England maintain more than 100,000 houses for the sale of intoxicating liquors, and spend an average of 600*l.* annually in the support of each. Every thirty families support their beer-shop, every three hundred their *place of worship*. Beer-houses and dram-shops are most plentiful in the poorest districts; they are there to be met with at every turn, startling us by the contrast of their mock splendour with the general squalor and dinginess of the scene. Here poverty is changed, not for itself, but for others, into finery and wealth. A constant succession of wretched votaries is kept up at these demon-temples, who receive in return for their offerings a draught of the enchanted cup. Pale, haggard, and hoary, they totter in—the youth in whose face consumption has fixed its mark; the aged sot, whose disgusting aspect forbids a second view; the child whose mother awaits him yonder, and who pauses on the threshold to steal a draught for himself. The number of these establishments, and the expensive means adopted to win custom, are proofs of the wealth they subtract from the pockets of the poor. How much better if the money expended in maintaining their gilded paraphernalia were spent in the purchase of food and clothing! What joy would such a diversion of expenditure occasion in a thousand starving homes!

Needless outlay infallibly leads to embarrassment, and this brings with it the necessity of attempting a cure. Too often the same improvidence which was the cause of their misfortune is manifested in the choice of a remedy. Instead of laying the axe to the root of the evil by the practice of rigid economy, they have recourse

to some expedient which relieves them for a moment at the expense of burdening the future. In more ways than one, this remedy is worse than the disease. By giving them a fresh supply of money it tends to strengthen that habit of lavish expenditure which is the very evil to be cured ; and by increasing their pecuniary liabilities it renders it next to impossible for them to escape its ruinous consequences. Sometimes they borrow money from private friends, which, to the unspeakable detriment of their moral principles, they are at length compelled to repudiate. Generally, however, they prefer to traffic with the pawnbroker. The practice of pawning prevails among the working classes to a frightful extent. In the poorer districts of large towns, perhaps, every other family is familiar with it. Articles of furniture are first pawned, then clothing, which is generally redeemed weekly, thus involving the ruinous payment of a weekly rent. But too often their clothing is never redeemed, and one lot after another being thus lost, the attempt to possess anything better than the common working dress is given up in despair. This practice is deemed degrading even by those who constantly resort to it—so much so, that in some districts a person acts as a sort of paid pawn-steward to families who are ashamed to transact the business themselves. Regularly on Saturday evening and Monday morning may he be seen laden with bundles of apparel, discharging the duties of his singular office. That unavoidable poverty sometimes forces the working classes to such expedients for obtaining temporary relief, is painfully true. The statements elicited by lord Ashley from a meeting of sempstresses in the metropolis bear strikingly on this

point.¹ The number present was between 1,000 and 2,000. Their average earnings were 2s. 10d. a-week. They had among them property to the value of 1,200*l.* in pledge, on which they were paying annual interest to the amount of 300*l.* This statement refers, however, to a particular class. In general, confirmed improvidence has a much larger share in keeping up the practice than such facts would seem to indicate; and in some instances we have known it resorted to by families whose united earnings constituted a handsome income.

The influences which spring from the state of the family relations are still more important in their bearing upon the domestic condition of the working classes than those already noticed. Home is the cradle and the school of man. There are acquired those vices or those virtues which are destined in after years to become a curse or a blessing to society. The boast of the Athenian statesman, that his son was master of the world, is literally true when applied to the collective influences of home. What the condition of the world shall be during the coming age is no doubtful matter; it is being actually decided in the nature of those influences which are allowed to surround its childhood.

Dismissing every utopian idea, it is impossible not to believe that the family relations, as they exist among the working classes, are wanting in purity and vigour. They are not attaining the exalted ends for which they were instituted. The old generation is not *educating* the new, training it to virtuous habits, inspiring it with noble sentiments, harmoniously developing and tutoring the functions it will shortly have to exercise; the former

simply gives existence to the latter, and then leaves it to shift for itself. In a growing number of cases, the parent has ceased to be the repository of domestic law. At the outset of youth the feeble ties of discipline are broken, and an inexperienced and ignorant being, owning no law but that of passionate impulse, dashes riotously on towards manhood. Thousands think of home merely as the place where they passed their childhood, and where, with their wages in their hand, they are still welcome; to them those disinterested thoughts, those attractive and softening influences, which ought to cluster around its image, are unknown. An approximation to such a state of things is lamentable in the extreme. It is a canker in the heart of society. The relationships which God has established, are more important than any artificial associations, and no evils can be more alarming than those which tend to destroy them.

*Among the chief circumstances which concur to deteriorate the state of the domestic relations among the working classes may be enumerated the following:—*unhealthy and inconvenient dwellings, improvident marriages, deficiencies in female training, the withdrawal of female influence from home, and the early period at which the young people of both sexes, especially in manufacturing towns, attain to pecuniary independence.

The dwellings of the working classes afford, generally speaking, the worst possible conditions for the growth of domestic comfort. The abodes of thousands are hovels rather than homes. It would seem that the health of their future occupants never entered

into the idea of their erection. With bad drainage and ventilation, sunk six feet deep in a fetid soil, with only one room for the manifold uses and wants of life,—what miserable accommodation for a human family! What a hopeful cradle for domestic bliss! How difficult must it be to realize, in such abodes, even a moderate share of comfort and refinement! Nor is there a syllable of exaggeration in such a statement. The reports which have been laid before the Health of Towns' Commission, and those which have appeared more recently in the columns of the "Morning Chronicle,"¹ furnish us with pictures of real life, far exceeding in wretchedness the inventions of fiction. Take, for example, that of a man, his wife, and eight children, living in a single apartment, measuring only twelve feet square. Two beds were crowded into this room at night, one of which contained the man, his wife, and two children, while the remaining six were crowded into the other. This case occurred on the borders of Devon, and that it conveys no exaggerated idea of the domestic condition of a large portion of the labouring classes, may be inferred from the fact, that on a house to house visitation which was made in the parish of St. George's, Hanover-square, London, at the instance of Lord Sandon, it was found, that out of 1,465 families of the labouring classes which the parish contained, no fewer than 929, considerably more than one-half, were living in a single room. In the large manufacturing towns of the north, one fifteenth of the population dwell in cellars. Often have we seen these places tenanted by families, all of whom were wasting away by disease. Children, in other respects

(1) Morning Chronicle, November 7, 1849.

hopeful, existing in various stages of decay, hastening to a sickly manhood or an early grave. Nor was there anything strange in such a process ; the cause lay naked before our eyes ; fever and consumption seemed the very denizens of the spot, and residence there a voluntary intrusion on the part of man within the fatal precincts of mortality.¹

It would be difficult to paint in colours sufficiently vivid, the influence of such homes upon the domestic condition of the working classes. It is impossible for refinement to flourish there. Spiritual impressions gained abroad, are sure to be effaced by the coarseness which holds sway under the parental roof. "Neatness and order are unknown in these miserable and overcrowded dwellings, modest reserve is impracticable, delicacy of feeling is destroyed, grossness of manners and language, the consequence of a mode of life which admits of no retirement, seclusion, and meditation, becomes the habit of childhood, and prepares the mind for vicious intercourse in future years. None of the comforts of home are there, none of its softening, purifying influences ; and can we wonder, if from such sinks of filth and immorality come forth, if they are spared by epidemic disease, the scandals and pests of society,—the mendicant, the drunkard, and the thief?"²

Improvident marriages are a source of much of the wretchedness which exists among the working classes. That step in life which demands from all, specially from them, the calmest weighing of prudential considerations, is not unfrequently abandoned solely to

(1) Letters on the Dwellings of the Poor, by the Rev. Charles Girdlestone, M.A.

(2) Bishop of London's Sermon at St. Paul's on Thanksgiving-Day.

passion. Those who have most need to pause before taking that step, rush into it with reckless precipitancy, and find themselves, even in their youth, with the burden of a family, obliged to become paupers upon the public, or upon the charity of friends but ill able to assist them. Many a young couple commit themselves to the struggle of life with absolutely no preparation. Their savings are inadequate to purchase even the merest rudiments of housekeeping; their income is very small and uncertain; a few months suffice to break a charm which is often followed by repentance and disgust; a loss of work, which might have been foreseen, renders their condition desperate, and soon they are back again under the parental roof, adding to its usual cares the burden of their maintenance. These remarks are not intended as any disparagement of marriage, nor even to insinuate that it may not be, in the most extreme cases, the least of two evils. Still further are they from implying that the indulgence of honourable affection is a privilege reserved for wealth. The heart is a domain of our common nature; it is everywhere equally sacred, and nowhere has the battle of life been fought more successfully than here. Still nothing can grant a release from the obligations of prudence. Love may be honourable and ardent, but of itself it is unable to furnish homes and to purchase food. Men are indebted for these things to a coarser currency, and may never hope to gain them by a violation of common sense.

In few things is there a more observable *deficiency among the wives of our manufacturing operatives* than in the ability to create the largest amount of comfort

from the materials placed at their command. Many are unable to prepare, as it ought to be prepared, the simplest meal, while the abstruser household mysteries are utterly unknown. In many a poor man's home no effort is ever made to realize the highest possible degree of neatness and order. Such an idea is never by any chance entertained: on the contrary, everything is suffered to sink to the lowest level of brute-like subsistence. What *will do*, not what *can be done*, is the household maxim. In some cases, this results from the degrading influence of excessive poverty, but in most, it must be ascribed to deficiencies in early training. Careful initiation into the duties of domestic life is essential to every woman who is emulous of discharging rightly the duties of wife and mother: but how many assume those duties in the homes of the working classes who have never enjoyed that inestimable advantage! At a tender age they were obliged to take a share in the maintenance of the family, and those hours which ought to have been spent under a mother's eye were passed in alternate toil and gossip with companions situated like themselves. This mode of life naturally resulted in a repugnance to domestic habits which each succeeding year tended to strengthen, and when on reaching womanhood they assumed the vows of marriage, it was with an utter incapacity for discharging its most sacred functions. Unskilled in those expedients, so familiar to the accomplished housewife, by which labour and money are economized, and unable even to conceive of those little arrangements which gladden the evening hour, and cause the labourer to forget the fatigues of the day in the paradise of home, their houses

gradually lost every vestige of comfort. Their aspect repulsive, their interior to the last degree wretched, they soon sank into mere receptacles where a certain number of human beings fed and slept. Nothing was easier than to foresee the consequences which have been too often realized in sad experience. Entire families have sunk into hopeless degradation, parents and children have seemed content with vegetating away their lives; the father has found a substitute for domestic comfort in the corner of a neighbouring tap-room, and drunkenness has brought in its train conjugal estrangement, filial insubordination and inevitable poverty.

Still more detrimental to the vigour of the domestic relations is the *withdrawal of female influence from home*. In manufacturing districts, this is chiefly consequent upon the employment of women in factories. A distinction, however, must be made between the employment of young females, and that of married women. The former practice it is impossible, perhaps undesirable, to discontinue. Where due pains are taken by the employer to insure a proper regard to health and morals, factory employment is as eligible for young females as any other. The dress-maker and plain sempstress often have to work longer hours, and in worse conditions as regards health, for the same or less wages. The daughter of the agricultural labourer works from morning to night in the open field, exposed to the inclemencies of a March or November sky. As compared with these classes, the factory girl is placed in an advantageous position; and the recent adoption of the ten-hours' system allows her ample time for domestic improvement. What is chiefly to be deprecated is the

employment of married women in any kind of labour which regularly requires their presence away from home. The consequences of this practice, if judged of by the mere loss of infant life, are alarming. While the mother is at the factory, the children are committed to the care of a woman who perhaps takes in washing. Those who are too young to walk are drugged to sleep with cordials, to the great injury of their health, while the rest are allowed to wander in the streets, and mix with the floating depravity there. Often the little creatures, straying too far, are unable to find their way back, and have to make their home for the night in the watch-house. The number of children reported as thus lost within the borough of Manchester alone in a single year, is between four and five thousand.¹ But the worst consequences are seen at home. Nothing can exceed the comfortlessness of a house from which both wife and husband have been absent since six in the morning, who find themselves in the evening, both equally tired, without fire or food, and surrounded with crying children. The pernicious results of such a state of things are inevitable. The wife is transformed into a scolding vixen, the husband takes refuge in the company of dissolute shop-mates, while the children become in early life proficient in vice, and prepare for their parents a sad retribution of shame and sorrow.

The *tendency to filial insubordination* which these circumstances must produce, is strengthened by the early age at which, in manufacturing districts especially, the youth of both sexes attain to pecuniary independence. In small towns, apprenticeship indentures

(1) Police Reports for the Borough of Manchester, 1847.

keep a boy dependent on his master, and, indirectly, upon his friends, till he reaches manhood ; and in agricultural districts, the same dependence is secured by the practice of engaging from year to year, as well as by the paramount influence of the employer. But where manufactures are extensively carried on, the case is different. The majority of the labouring youth are there held by no tie which may not be severed in a moment. Two or three lads often find themselves at the age of fifteen the chief support of a family. Their father perhaps has been thrown out of work, or the smallness of his wages makes him dependent on their additional income. In many cases, this is given up cheerfully and without any diminution of respect. It is impossible to conceive a more beautiful sight than some families exhibit, when all throw their earnings into a common treasury, from which a common parent provides for the wants of each. But the consciousness of bearing such an important part in the domestic commonwealth, often awakens a spirit of rebelliousness in the younger branches. They insist on doing as they please at home, and choosing their own companions and pleasures abroad, till at length the parental authority loses all its force, and exists only to amuse by its imbecility. But that authority is divine, and cannot be slighted without danger. It is a kind of natural conservatism with which Providence has fenced the interests of mankind, in order to maintain a just and steady progress.

We have thus passed in rapid review the chief characteristics of the personal and domestic condition of the working classes. Sufficient has been adduced to show that this is the department in which their elevation

must begin. It is here that the foundation must be laid on which ulterior efforts may be permitted to rear the fabric of a virtuous, enlightened and happy people : here philanthropy may find its proper work—the remedies in its possession are precisely such as evils of this character demand. The mists of ignorance must be dissipated by the light of science, physical wretchedness must be ameliorated, the dormant energies and susceptibilities of the mind must be brought into healthy action, purer tastes must be imparted, and nobler sentiments aroused. We would not proscribe the highest remedial agencies, let all be set in motion, for all will help on the desired result ; but the peculiar evils we have been reviewing are of a social kind, and the motives required to remove them are such as humanity alone ought to inspire. If Christianity possessed that power over the hearts of men to which it is entitled, other remedies would be needless ; the sovereignty of its virtues would include them all. The time will come when it shall possess that power ; meanwhile it will arm our philanthropy with irresistible motives to reflect, that every step gained in promoting the elevation of the people will materially serve to hasten its coming.

II. We now proceed a step further in reviewing the condition of the working classes. From the circle which encompasses their persons and their homes, we enter that in which their duties and opinions stand confronted with the state.

This has hitherto been rendered party-ground, but the patriot will deem it so no longer. It is one of the

many signs which greet us of the dawning of a better day, that the voice of faction is almost hushed, and that men of all shades of political creed are merging their differences in the attempt to elevate the people. Avowing a supreme indifference for mere party views, we propose, in the first place, to point out and illustrate the political sentiments which prevail among the working classes ; in the second, to indicate the place those opinions hold in the historical development of socialism ; and in the third, to examine the more recent pretensions of that system as a means of promoting the happiness of mankind.

The importance of this subject could hardly be exaggerated. It demands and must receive the serious consideration of all classes. It becomes us to remember that a strong government is essential to the public welfare, and that the strength of governments can only be measured by the allegiance of the people. The circumstances of the times are silently enlarging the basis of political power, constituencies are becoming more numerous, and it is no longer hazardous to predict that the time must come when the influence of the operative population will greatly increase. In a constitution-like ours, numerical strength is an important element of political power. Where every great question is virtually settled at the poll-booth, the largest party is necessarily that which rules the State. The principles of the majority soon make their way to the heights of government, and thence pour down a healthy or pernicious influence upon society at large. Recent events may also teach us that all real power is vested ultimately in the people. Every question is liable to be

decided in the last resort by physical force, and in periods of national excitement, when an entire nation is the actor, the actions of a moment may give birth to arrangements which will last for centuries. Hence it is the imperative call of prudence, to inquire what kind of principles exist among the masses.

In adverting to the POLITICAL SENTIMENTS of the working classes, we gratefully admit that, on political questions, *their conduct is characterized by a large amount of native good sense and traditional order.* A much higher encomium is merited by a few, whose natural capacity, strengthened by habits of reading and reflection, entitles them to a foremost place in the social body. To such a distinction the bulk of the working classes can lay no claim ; but they possess what is of sterling value, a disinclination to acts of violence, a distaste for mere theories, and a disposition to bear with patience those evils which time promises to remedy. In them may be found many of the peculiar excellences of the English character. They are chiefly distinguished by a power of endurance united to a love of progress. “Bear it, and move on,” is their maxim—a maxim, the principle of which sustained us under the pressure of a foreign conquest, and silently evoked from the ruins of oppression a free and mighty people. They are just, humane, and forgiving, prone neither to plunder nor revenge ; in their most excited moments they respect the rights of property, and pause before the sanctity of human life ; their political virtues have sometimes been put to the severest test, and the manner in which they have passed the ordeal entitles them to the lasting gratitude of their country. Within

the last four years, Europe has been involved in the horrors of civil war. The conflagration broke out in Switzerland, thence it spread like lightning on all sides, till the whole continent was wrapt in flame. A sad inheritance was thus bequeathed to posterity, when the wrongs of ages, apparently in the very act of extinction, fixed themselves in records of blood which no time will efface. During the same interval, our own attitude has been one of comparative repose. Our working classes have manifested an invincible attachment to order, not because they can point to no real or imaginary grievance, or because no leader incited them to revolt,—on the contrary, they were assailed by the most specious and subtle tactics, they were assured that the middle classes were hostile to their interests, that the existing social scheme was a conspiracy against industrial rights, and that a single united blow would lay the government at their feet ; but all these tactics were in vain, because they were determined that the battle, if fought at all, should be fought peacefully, and heartily detested measures which bloodshed alone could make triumphant.

The first and most obvious feature in the political sentiments of the working classes is *the prevalence of discontent*. Frequent outbursts of popular feeling have laid this fact bare to the world. It shows itself in various shapes, now agitating for an extension of the suffrage, and anon broaching to listening ears the wildest dreams of the ultra-republican school. The advocacy of the “ Charter ” has long been the favourite form of agitation, but many have secretly looked further than this, and longed for such changes as would make

our government a pure democracy. With such extreme views the masses of the people have no direct sympathy ; they are animated by the most loyal and chivalrous feelings towards the illustrious lady who occupies the throne ; but most of them are familiar with principles of thought which, under possible circumstances, might lead them into conclusions which no lover of his country would wish to see realized.

It is necessarily the misfortune of national institutions that they are the only representatives of the aggregate forces of society, the first of a long succession of factors which seems to determine the private condition of every individual in the state. No other organizations have so much power, and therefore, by an easy fallacy, they come to be regarded as all-influential. Hence government always receives a measure both of praise and censure, to which it has no just claim. The happiness of a flourishing community argues wisdom in the senator, while commercial distress and increasing poverty are infallible proofs that he is unequal to the demands of his high station. This misfortune is increased if any considerable number of the people are excluded from political power. The possession of that power is straightway clothed with a degree of importance which is altogether delusive. They magnify its efficacy ; —it is kept from them, and therefore must be valuable. Allowing too little for the imperfection of all human institutions, ready to ascribe every evil to bad laws, and every blessing to good ones, the office of the legislator is clothed with a potency which, in the nature of things, it cannot possess ; and the placing of it in their hands seems all that is requisite for securing the well-being of the

community. In such a state of things, whatever might be the expediency of a spirit of concession to popular demands, its moral results, at least in one respect, could hardly fail to be beneficial. It would expose the fallacy of looking for social regeneration at the hand of politics, and would direct attention to those more influential causes which are found in the bosom of the people.

As the condition of the community is generally ascribed to the good or bad measures of government, so, for a similar reason, the quality of the acts of government is often imputed to the form, whether monarchical or republican, under which it may happen to exist. History, both ancient and modern, furnishes us with many instances in which nations have exchanged monarchy for republicanism, and republicanism for monarchy, with the hope of securing for themselves a more just and beneficent sway. But if any substantial good were realized in those instances, it was attained by removing improper persons from power, and not merely by altering the form under which they held it. The revolution of 1688, which established William and Mary of Orange on the throne of these realms, was at least as efficacious in procuring a just administration of public affairs, as the creation of a republic in Rome on the expulsion of the Tarquins. Popular forms of government are valuable chiefly on account of the guarantee they furnish that political power shall be entrusted to proper hands ; but that they often fail of this end, and that, at best, they exert a very slow influence on the progress of society, abundant facts are at hand to demonstrate. Mexico and the United States are both republics ; Spain and Great Britain are both constitutional

monarchies ; but, in both cases, what a difference exists between those countries in all the elements of national prosperity ! A proof is furnished at our very doors. Great Britain and Ireland are governed by the same laws, but who will compare the social condition of the two ? The same institutions which are here found consistent with the enjoyment of a large amount of social good, are found utterly unable to allay the hydra-headed demon which still wastes our sister-land. Social happiness is produced, not by putting into sudden activity the artificial contrivances of man, but by steadily working, through a long interval, the great mechanisms of nature. It is the growth of ages, not the efflorescence of a sunny hour ; and a growth whose roots are in the people's hearts. Political institutions confessedly exert an influence on the social condition of nations, but this influence works slowly, and becomes effectual by operating a change in national character and habits.

A second and more important feature of the political sentiments of the working classes is, that *they are associated more or less directly with deep-seated disgust at the practical workings of the existing social system.* This feeling is very widely spread, alike in villages and large towns ; in rural and manufacturing districts ; among the most ignorant and the most educated portions of the operative population. The contrast of excessive poverty and excessive wealth which everywhere meets the eye, and presents so dark an enigma to inquiring minds, is to them a matter of experience, and gives them, without the aid of thinking, principles of the most dangerous tendency. Vast masses of the poor are Socialists in feeling. They have been helped to no

induction, plied with no syllogism, yet there the consequence exists, firmly imbedded in their hearts. They are quite unconscious that the guesses in which they shrewdly mutter their discontent, are dignified with philosophic titles, and are learnedly expounded to the world in weary volumes. It is instinct which speaks within them, and instinct is incapable of being confuted or taught. It may be difficult for the manufacturer, the tradesman, the capitalist, for all who are living in easy circumstances, and, perhaps, are amassing large fortunes, to find a flaw in the system which enables them to create wealth; but no such difficulty is felt by the tens of thousands whose wages are a mere pittance, and whose life is reduced to a mere parleying with death.

It is important to mark how political discontent has invariably been the offspring of social causes. It is only in an advanced state of intelligence that a people well-provided with all the elements of physical comfort can be prevailed upon to contend for abstract rights. A liberal distribution of corn was found the most efficacious expedient in quelling the seditions of the Roman populace, and the condition upon which the revolutionists of 1848 consented to remove the barricades from the streets of Paris was the opening of national workshops. True, agitation has generally been based upon political theories, but these theories did not *cause* the agitation,—they were, in reality, one with it, and arose from the necessity which was felt for justifying it before the world. The idea of a revolution had realized itself in the imagination of all France, long before the theory of the social contract was advanced in its support. Had great

social evils never existed, Voltaire would have written in vain, and the revolution of 1789 would have been reduced to a simple problem in political dynamics, which might have been left for peaceable solution in future years. If, in this country, we mark the periods at which the cry for the "Charter" was most furious, we shall find them to have been precisely those at which bread was dearest and wages lowest. A good harvest or a revival of trade was sufficient to scatter agitation to the winds. It is only when employment fails, and the necessities of life become dear, that theories of all kinds are discussed, and thousands of the working men press forward their demands by public agitation. Invariably the maxim holds,—let the people be employed and remunerated at fair prices, and we need stand in no dread of revolutions.

Chartism is little more than the shadow of political Socialism. Its chief advocates regard it only as an instrument for effecting such changes in the fundamental arrangements of society as they may think necessary for securing a larger share of temporal well-being to its poorer members. The changes contemplated are social, not political merely; they go further than any extension of the suffrage, or any repeal of taxation; they aim, in short, at a complete equalization of property, and that, not by any modification of existing laws, but by substituting a code of arbitrary expedients in their stead.

Socialism is of ancient birth. Its full development was reserved for modern times; but its principles rank among the oldest phenomena of history. Its existence may be satisfactorily traced to the passions of the human

heart, in combination with the instinctive teachings of nature respecting the original equality of mankind. It is a blending of envy and reason ; of envy strengthened by reason, and reason blinded by envy ; an honest but mistaken protest against the inequalities which have existed in the social condition of all nations. Sin has deranged the social system. Benevolence and justice are essential to its right working, and these have been displaced by selfishness. One of the many evil consequences of this derangement is, that those gentle inequalities which Providence permitted to diversify the aspect of society, have been raised into walls of division, which interrupt the flow of sympathy, and distinguish men into separate castes. It needs little discernment to decide that such a state of things is wrong, and history is crowded with the violent attempts which have been made to rectify it. This is the secret of those conspiracies and revolutions which lend such interest to the past ; a sense of injustice, rankling in the minds of the masses, has produced those outbursts of popular discontent which have so often been repressed by physical force. Modern times are favourable to association in attempting to gain a common object, and association can only be formed by the promulgation of doctrines. Ruder ages only cared to *act* ; the present seeks to vindicate its actions. Hence Socialism puts on the garb of elaborate theory ; it can boast of sages and professors. The same feelings which in the middle ages would have marshalled a famished peasantry in battle array, now enters the intellectual arena, and seeks to change the world by dint of intellectual warfare.

One country and one age of the world have been more fruitful in political and social theories than any other ; that country is France, and that age the close of the eighteenth century. The revolution of 1789 was accompanied by intellectual throes as severe as the social convulsions which it produced. In advocating the independence of our American colonies, the French literati enjoyed a freedom of utterance on all kindred topics which, in different circumstances, would never have been granted under an absolute monarchy. This freedom was turned to account. Voltaire wrote, and Rousseau raved. They spoke of a glorious future, when "kingcraft" and "priestcraft" should be abolished. The nation believed them, overthrew the throne, and ignored religion. The revolution was tantamount to a complete change in the social condition of France ; society was annihilated, and had to be created anew, and a clear stage presented itself on which theories of all kinds might compete for favour. From that moment, Socialism secretly aspired to the position of a distinct party in the state. The instincts of the nation kept it true to the natural order of things ; but a few enthusiasts continued to write and propagate their views in private, and the success they realized by dint of persevering effort, gave at length a degree of importance to their doctrines which, in a speculative point of view, they never deserved. Fourier and St. Simon have a right to be regarded as the chiefs of the Socialist school, but, both in France and Germany, they have been outstripped by their disciples. Their principles, instead of being left to the guidance of enthusiasm, have been submitted to the test of logic, and the result has been a heartless and

irreligious system, in which humanity is degraded, and the rights of God and conscience are forgotten. It is a highly significant fact, that the extreme republican party throughout the continent are as much attached to infidelity as to Socialism, and that their triumph, humanly speaking, would sound the death-knell of religion.

Socialism was indebted for its introduction into this country to the writings of Robert Owen. Its parentage was little known, and its sympathies with infidelity were but slowly discovered. Its fair exterior imposed on many honest minds, who were satisfied of the defects of existing society, and were ready to adopt any truly remedial measures, even to the adoption of a new system. As is well known, it at first met with unparalleled success among the working classes, but its decline was equally rapid. Two causes chiefly contributed to this result; the practical good sense of Englishmen repudiated its economical principles as unsound, and the open avowal of irreligion on which it ventured in the heyday of success, was more than the bulk of the people could endure. Our tracts and Bibles, our schools and missions, had preoccupied the ground, the working classes were unprepared for an unblushing avowal of infidelity, and Socialism was decreed a failure. But though no longer in its own name a candidate for public favour, it is yet far from being defunct. Its professors have assumed other names; its principles, resolved by analysis, have combined with extreme political views on the one hand, and with ordinary scepticism on the other. The Socialism of ten years ago sustains an important relation to the popular movements of the present day, and especially to political

agitation. Owen gathered round him a group of mercurial spirits who, having become missionaries in a great enterprise, could not possibly return to the ranks of private life. By a kind of natural necessity, having once turned agitators, they were forced to continue so. Hence, on the failure of Socialism, no other alternative presented itself than that of suppressing for a time the irreligious element which made it generally distasteful, and bringing prominently forward those political and social doctrines which, in certain combinations, might still be widely acceptable. There is scarcely a single department of popular effort which has not suffered from this cause. In some instances, the advocacy of temperance principles has been made the means of instilling infidel views into the minds of a worthy section of the working classes ; the multitudes who are anxious to obtain an extension of the franchise have been lured by violent leaders to the brink of treason, and in many districts, Chartism has become synonymous with infidelity. It is high time that the working classes inquired into the character and principles of the men who aspire to be their guides in the difficult path of social reform. On the stage of public life there are men who flatter the people the more easily to cheat them, whose prime passion is selfishness, whose only religion is hatred of all religion, and whose political creed is destitute of every peculiarity save extravagance ; but there are also men of tried character and noble principles, who are too honest to flatter even as the price of popularity, and whose abilities are equal to any task they may undertake. These are the people's friends ; in these let the people trust.

While Socialism was thus endeavouring, without success, to recover its place in popular esteem, it daily gathered strength among our continental neighbours, and at length, favoured by concurrent circumstances, ventured upon a deed which history has registered as the French revolution of 1848. That event may be regarded as its first overt act; its first attempt to change, by forcible measures, the existing social system. That act was applauded by a clique of political agitators at home, the same party-cries were adopted, and, beyond a doubt, if it had not been for the firm stand which was made by the bulk of the people, it would have been parodied on British soil. In considering that event, it is necessary to premise that whatever might be the general feelings of the French nation towards the Orleans dynasty, the revolution which actually overthrew the throne was achieved by a handful of the people. Some political change, perhaps, was generally desired, but the downfall of the monarchy must be ascribed to the Socialist or red-republican party alone, and the principles which occasioned its downfall would, if consistently carried out, have led to the downfall of society itself. The first step which was taken, after the victory of the barricades, by those who had installed the provisional government in power, was to demand work and wages. This demand was acceded to; national workshops were opened; all who wished to obtain employment obtained it at a fixed rate of remuneration. For some time, the Parisian populace virtually paid themselves out of the national exchequer such wages as they chose to insist upon, for such an amount of labour as they chose to perform, the farce being carried on

through the medium of government officials. It was impossible for such a scheme to continue ; the same method, if acted on by private individuals, would have wasted a colossal fortune in a few months. The whole plan constituted a gigantic system of pauper relief. The wages paid to the workmen were a clear loss to the treasury, and had to be made up by increased taxation. The system, so far as it was carried out, was a legalized abstraction of money from one portion of the people, in order, by a simple process, to transfer it to the pockets of the rest, and its extension to the whole of France would soon have stranded the nation on the shoals of bankruptcy. The increase of public burdens would daily diminish the amount of money which could be employed in trade ; employment at private establishments would thus daily become less, occasioning fresh burdens to be devolved in their turn upon the people. It is easy to see that the circle would soon be run, and that all classes would soon sink to the same level of hopeless poverty.

Such is the *history* of Socialism ; what are its *principles* ? We will take as their exposition the imposing formula under which it has lately challenged the attention of the world. " Liberty, equality, and fraternity," when used with a consistent and honest meaning, is a cry worthy of being inscribed upon the escutcheon of all free nations. Liberty is one of the noblest gifts of Heaven. Its possession is the first thing requisite to a virtuous and happy existence. Other evils annoy man, but slavery in a sense annihilates him. Without freedom, his sense of responsibility decays into mere animal fear ; his feelings are frozen ; his will is manacled ;

he is a section of a machine, a fragment of society, but not a man. Freedom is the breath of life to the civilized world : suspend it, and commerce declines, the arts wither, religion is sensible of an icy touch, and every species of social good expires. Freedom is no party cry ; it issues from the heart of nature, and is echoed from every nook of Britain—from the cottage, the castle, and the throne. A more equal distribution of temporal good is an object which every philanthropist ardently desires ; to accomplish it is the great problem which lies for solution before the present age. So far from being averse to it, the most distinguished members of society are engaged in its promotion ; nor are we sanguine in predicting that ere long it will be substantially realized. Towards this point every species of philanthropic effort is silently advancing. Every school which is opened, every mechanic's institution which is established, every building club or freehold land society which is put in operation, has this for its end—the realizing of the highest degree of attainable equality among the various members of the state. As for fraternity,—this is the very spirit of the gospel. It was our Divine Redeemer who first taught men that word, and the Christian church which first presented its living embodiment to the eyes of a selfish and wondering world. Within her bosom, based on equal spiritual rights, a true and attainable brotherhood still exists, imperfect yet, but daily improving, and destined to prepare us for the purer forms of heaven. Liberty, equality, fraternity,—we adopt the cry ! The formula shall be graven on our hearts—not as the ambiguous abstract of untried theories, nor the insidious profession of the manslayer—

but as the language in which religion proclaims her triumphs, and humanity exults on desecrating the distant goal.

But *what is freedom?* Not, surely, the infinite multiplication of laws ; not, surely, the existence of a central power whose agencies shall perpetually pervade the recesses of domestic life ; not, surely, the having a government so excessively paternal as to take cognisance of our thousand petty wants, and furnish us with standard modes of supplying them. At the hands of one man or of many, such kindness would be killing. Freedom consists essentially in permitting each man to *be himself*, in allowing an absolute manifestation to take place of his inner being, in reducing the restraints of law to the smallest possible number which is compatible with the preservation of order. This is freedom, and to withhold it, whether from motives of cruelty or kindness, whether at the instance of an autocrat or a board of citizens, is not freedom, but a newfangled despotism which for convenience usurps the name.

Examined by this test, the principles of Socialism are the very converse of freedom. The Socialist proceeds by an *à priori* process to shape out the idea of what society should be, and this idea all men are expected to recognise and obey. In expecting ever to see this idea established in practice, it is difficult to see how he can steer clear of a flagrant violation of natural right. It would be visionary to expect that all classes of society will be so convinced of its truth as to adopt it spontaneously. Whatever degree of success may attend its propagation, the number of recusants, on the most favourable supposition, will always continue very large. How

then shall they be dealt with? Shall they be allowed to remain neutral? But it is probable they will belong to precisely that class of persons whose concurrence will be most required, those who have most to lose by such a change. Shall they then be compelled to surrender themselves and their wealth to the community? This would, to say the least, be a very inauspicious inauguration of the reign of freedom. But supposing this difficulty got over, and Socialism successfully established, how would its establishment affect the exercise of personal freedom? The present system of society can have no recusants. It lets every man alone, so long as he permits the same liberty to others. It allows all possible indulgence to private views, provided only they are harmless. If a person choose to separate himself from society, society can do without him. If he like to establish a commune, no law prohibits him, the land is before him, he may purchase and build. But Socialism requires the concurrence of all the members of the community in the same object and the same plan; the introduction of any modification into its system, like violence done to a piece of clock-work, would derange the whole. Hence the community would find it necessary to prohibit all theorizing on the principles of society, since it might possibly lead a portion of its members to dissent from the existing scheme. In keeping with this foreseen necessity, Socialism proscribes certain kinds of literary effort, and poets may esteem it an honour that they will be placed among the exiles from Utopia. But Socialism imposes still greater limitations on practice. For the most benevolent reasons it besets us behind and before, and guards us even against our-

selves. It forbids trade, since it tends to social inequality ; it forbids the public worship of God, since religion is a fabulous contrivance ; it forbids marriage, since the irrefragability of the marriage tie is bondage to the passions, and a monopoly of common rights ; it forbids political agitation, since all power will be lodged, as a matter of course, with the wisest and most intelligent citizens ; even popular suffrage will stand in danger of being obliged to vindicate its claims, since the management of public affairs will slide of their own accord into the hands of those who possess the greatest talents ; and in such happy circumstances, when selfishness and ambition shall have no existence, genius and capacity will naturally constitute themselves supreme. The choice of a profession is a most important circumstance to individual happiness. On the present system every man settles this for himself ; guided in his decision by the firm, but not unbending laws of life, every man enters cheerfully upon those pursuits which lie nearest to his social condition, ennobled by the fact that he enters them of his own accord, and that no social barrier keeps him from ascending, should he ever find the means of doing so. Nor is this freedom useless. In many instances, it has enabled a poor lad, to whom no social board would have given credit for superior talents, to reach the proudest eminences of literary and civic honour. On Socialist principles such freedom would be unknown, every man would have his pursuits fixed for him by the arbitrary decision of a public board, or by the fallible voice of the people. Such methods would determine the amount of common sense which every man possessed, and in what department of labour he

should be employed, whether of magistrate, scavenger, or policeman. No one acquainted with human nature can expect that these appointments would always be made according to the capacity of the individual. The free competition in which native power delights would be proscribed, the "fair field and no favour" in which genius of every kind proves itself to be genius, would be closed, and the position of every man would be fixed by the iron decision of irresponsible committees. In a short time, the administration of such a system would become a vast jobbery, in which the more designing and unscrupulous members of the community would play the tyrant over their simple-minded and well-intentioned brethren.

A strange spectacle has been reserved for the nineteenth century, one of the most egregious examples of human inconsistency which the history of the world affords. The Socialists of the present day know not what it is they ask for. They professedly take their stand on the extreme verge of democracy, and yet they plead for the adoption of the most perfect and unmitigated system of despotism which it would be possible to frame. They find fault with the encroachments of government, blame a centralizing policy, condemn the principles of monopoly when applied to trade, and yet they cry out for a social scheme which would obtrude its agencies into the most sacred privacies of domestic life, grasp the absolute control of all personal and local interests, and extend the principles of monopoly and protection to every conceivable branch of human enterprise. True democracy, if they did but understand it, whatever political form it may assume, consists

essentially in allowing free scope to all social energies. To the degree in which the world has enjoyed this freedom, we stand indebted for every great advance which has been made in the condition of man. Great reformers have arisen, mighty changes have been effected, evils which once seemed impregnable have yielded to the assault of truth, and we stand apparently on the eve of still greater and more beneficial events. Existing Socialist theories are themselves the offspring of the very freedom they would fain repress. Relax the swaddling bands with which society is still bound, and its progress will be still more rapid ; tighten them, and progress will become impossible. Art is more perfect than nature, because art converses with the ideal, to which nature does not aspire. For this reason man can easily construct a social theory more perfect than any which is actually developed, but it is irreducible to practice, it is nothing but the brilliant reflection of his own mind in the stream of human affairs. Nature cannot claim the absolute perfection of his theory ; she is mixed, clouded, laden with many evils ; but she possesses, what his theory does not possess, life—life Divinely communicated, in virtue of which she is continually correcting her own excesses, and ever advancing towards a higher degree of excellence. To recognise and allow full scope to this tendency in politics and social life is true democracy ; every deviation from it tends to despotism ; and its converse, as seen in Socialist doctrines, is despotism of the rankest and most destructive form.

Such is the slender sympathy which Socialism has with freedom ; let us now ask *whether it is fitted to*

produce a desirable equality among the various members of the state? We say a *desirable* equality, for it is not every kind of equality which is so. The beggars of London and the serfs of Russia are pretty nearly equal, as nearly so as the most ardent leveller could desire, but equality in their case affords no mitigation to their wretchedness. Universally, the fact that our neighbours are in no better circumstances than ourselves, affords, to say the best, a very poor and questionable consolation. That equality alone is worth wishing for which is consistent with a positive increase in the elements of social well-being, and with the permanent happiness of society.

The distinction here pointed out is deserving of some attention, since it will enable us to submit the pretensions of Socialism to a more accurate test. We will select a narrower case for illustration. Two men are employed in the same factory, and in the same branch of labour, one of whom, by superior tact and intelligence, aided perhaps by a few advantages of a more questionable character, earns twice as much as the other. If the wages of the former are required to bring up a family with comfort, the wages of the latter must be only half enough, and an evil exists which calls for a remedy of some kind. The rate of wages in the two cases ought to be more nearly equal: true, but how shall it be made equal; by lowering the larger amount, or by raising the smaller? Let the former plan be tried first; acquaint the more ingenious mechanic that all he gains above a certain sum will be taken from him to eke out the wages of his neighbour, and what will be the result? He will have fewer motives to

industry than before ; as a consequence, less work will be done ; he will earn the amount of wages stipulated for him to receive, but not a shilling more ; and, in the end, his condition will be greatly deteriorated, without any corresponding improvement in his neighbour's. No matter how specious the disguise, or circuitous the method by which this process is carried on ; no matter how bland the professions or philanthropic the views of its conductors ; while human nature remains what it is the same results will invariably follow. Equality will be produced on this method, but it will be equality in ignorance, idleness and low wages. If this is the only kind of equality which can be produced, it will be better to let it alone, since it is undoubtedly preferable for one to be rich than for both to be poor. Try, however, another plan : instead of diminishing the larger amount of wages, increase the smaller ; endeavour, by means of education, to give to both individuals equal, or nearly equal capacities ; remove all unfair restrictions ; let both be actuated by the same high moral principles, and the difference between them will vanish. They will be as nearly equal as is necessary for their mutual happiness, and if either is poorer than his companion, he will at least possess a far greater share of all that constitutes temporal well-being than he could possibly realize on any other principles.

This case corresponds sufficiently for the purposes of illustration with the larger one which society presents. All social classes may be summarily divided into the rich and the poor. Within these limits we find the widest possible extremes ; the millionaire and the man who is hardly worth a penny ; those who live sumptu-

ously, and those who are wanting bread. No candid man denies the desirableness of diminishing the distance which now separates these classes; the only question on which a doubt can possibly arise, is that which inquires by what method that evil can be most effectually reached. Two theories aim at solving this question—Socialism on the one hand, and that which favours the existing order of things on the other. The theory of Socialism, stripped of its details, is just this,—take from the rich, and what you take from them give to the poor. This process is greatly mystified by the means which are devised for conducting it, but no arrangement of central banks or of general collectors and distributors can hide its essential features. It is, in reality, a process of abstraction from the earnings of one class to eke out the earnings of another. This method might be tolerated if it merely equalized existing wealth, and did not tend to diminish the resources of society; but from what we know of human nature, it can hardly be doubted that if it were carried out, social retrogression to a very serious extent would immediately ensue. The wheels of society would be turned back; the dominion which science and industry have gradually acquired over nature would be relinquished, luxuries would first disappear, then comforts, till man would have to battle for mere existence. It will be found upon examination that private interest was usually the source of those discoveries which have added so much to the stock of human happiness; and if we imagine the motives which spring from it to be withdrawn, we can conceive of no moral power which is able to supply their place. A

mechanic plods for years over some ingenious conception, in the hope that, if he succeeds, it will make his fortune : a capitalist of fifty pounds enters into business, works early and late, practises the most thrifty economies, with the expectation of growing wealthy : a young man enters college, conquers, by dint of indefatigable zeal, the difficulties of science, becomes almost a martyr to his studies, fired with a thirst for superiority, and with the hope of reaching, through their medium, an influential position in life. Such are the moral forces which have combined to raise the existing social fabric : remove them, and it will become a pile of melting snow. Annihilate the cause, and the effects will cease. If by quarrelling about the distribution of the sunbeams we put out the sun, our quarrel will end in darkness ; and if, chagrined with the inequality of human acquisitions, we destroy the sole principle of *acquisitiveness*, our contention will soon be brought to a close by discovering that nothing is left to fight for. Man will not work for others with the same energy and earnestness with which he works for himself ; and if obliged at least to wear the semblance of doing so, he will soon find out the lowest degree of real labour which can be joined to the highest degree of apparent effort.

It is difficult to forbear smiling, with a mixture of surprise and pity, at the abortive wish which Socialism displays to set aside the operation of a great providential law. Men who aspire to be reformers ought not to be so ignorant of the limits within which all human effort is necessarily confined. We may control or modify established principles, but we cannot change or destroy them. Theory will not reverse the great

facts of our nature ; these are the work of God, and remain immutable through all ages. The electric fluid may be drawn from the clouds, and led about harmlessly at our pleasure ; we may borrow power from a little stream to set a thousand factories in motion ; by adjusting his sails to the shifting courses of the winds, the mariner can force his way through the ocean ; but in these instances of successful effort man works *with* nature, in an inferior sense it may be affirmed that he co-operates with God. Let him neglect the laws of nature, or act in opposition to them, and his achievements are at an end ; the lightning, the water, and the winds can only be purchased on their own terms. In the same way, man is competent to control or modify the action of social laws, but change or ignore them he cannot. He may devise what social scheme he pleases, but if it be not in harmony with himself it will never work. The native forces of his bosom, unsuspended, will continue to move in their own orbit, leaving his system without any support, or else will dash against it and reduce it to ruins.

It is readily granted that *absolute* equality can only be attained by adopting the principles of Socialism ; but equality of this kind neither bears on it the authority of God, nor is consistent with the well-being of man. It is a system which will never be adopted spontaneously, and can never be made permanent by force. If man were so disposed, all its objects could be accomplished on the existing system by mere benevolence, and the simple fact that they are not attained is a sufficient proof that, till his dispositions are changed, they are unattainable. What all classes want is, not

absolute equality,—an impossible abstraction ; but an increase and better distribution of the elements of social well-being. It is surely childish and useless to raise the cry, “ I will have as much as my neighbour,” if the principles on which alone this absolute equality can be attained would soon reduce that “ as much ” to a mere pittance of the necessities of life. More manly and hopeful would it be to aid the determination which Providence seems to have fixed in the generous hearts of our countrymen of all classes.—Social wretchedness shall exist no longer except as the punishment of vice, and vice itself shall be assailed, in its darkest strongholds, by the influences of philanthropy and religion. Those gloomy depths where thousands, descended from a common ancestry, have long been overwhelmed by ignorance and crime, shall at length be illumined by the torch of piety. Every legislative enactment, every social law, every prejudice, though never so strong and hallowed, which, when examined, shall be found to rest on aught but justice, shall be sternly, but with a forgiving and fraternal spirit, abjured ; the paths which lead to power, intelligence, and fortune, shall in time be opened equally to all, and the fewer inequalities which may then remain shall be softened by the hand of love. By these means we may confidently look for the disappearance of social evils without the risk of giving birth to others which are still more to be dreaded. The aggregate amount of national wealth and industry will continue to increase, while enlarged capacities, equal opportunities, and the moderating influence of religion on individual character, will raise the poorest classes of the community to the enjoyment of competence and comfort.

But *Socialism professes to be fraternal*, a profession which its recent atrocities render necessary, but which they make it impossible for us to believe. The constructors of that imposing formula, which seemed, in our simple British ears, to have concentrated in itself the largest amount of love and justice which the world had ever beheld in combination, soon tore the visor from their movements, and gave the world a novel exposition of fraternity. In February, 1848, the principles of Socialism acquired a temporary ascendancy at the hands of sixty or a hundred thousand of the Parisian populace. In June, those principles received a direct negative from nineteen-twentieths of the nation. One would have thought that common justice, simple hatred of coercion, to say nothing of those disinterested sentiments which fraternity inspires, would have led them to postpone the adoption of their views to the deliberate vote of so vast a majority of their countrymen. But mark their conduct:—the brothers of February flew to arms in June; five months had sufficed, in connexion with altered circumstances, to change their pacific principles; barricades were raised at all points, and civil war was waged with circumstances of barbarity which Europe had not known for ages; not for the maintenance of natural rights against the encroachments of despotic power, but in order to force the nostrums of a party on the acceptance of a great nation. The attempt was fruitless, but history has recorded it, in order to teach posterity the meaning of brotherhood when used in Socialist professions.

But from facts we pass to a brief consideration of *principles*. It is the privilege of systems to have

their merits canvassed apart from the conduct of their abettors, and this privilege we cheerfully concede to the one which is under review. Fraternity among mankind is too great a blessing for us to neglect any means which are professedly able to obtain it. At the outset, it would seem probable that the simplest social scheme would be the likeliest to promote fraternal feelings between man and man, since it would furnish the fewest provocations to the malevolent passions. When each person is left to his own exertions, and the enactments of society are confined to matters of order, there must occur fewer chances of personal collision than when every position in life is made a matter of vote and preference ; where every man would be able to point to a specific decision on the part of others as the sole reason why he filled an inferior position, instead of such as he might possibly deem himself qualified to hold. Society, on this latter system, would be a vast and complicated rivalry, carried on in an atmosphere daily thickened by contending passions. But Socialism is the perfection of such a system, the most complicated of all conceivable complications. Socialism can be established only by perverting or suppressing great principles. Freedom of thought and action must be proscribed before society can be clipped down to the stiff equalities of a formal system, and in this proscription we discern the blow which must prove fatal to brotherhood. The springs of action within the soul will not suffer bondage, its impulses possess a freedom which is perpetually renewed in every man and in every age. Let them have free course and they grow benevolent ; chain them and they angrily chafe and foam till they are set at liberty.

Wealth can ally itself in holiest friendship with poverty. Intellectual extremes have often found the golden mean of love. Voluntary choice is the procurer of these unions ; once enforce them, and they become impossible. Oblige wealth and intellect to enter into such unequal alliances, and bitter enmity will ensue, society will be covered with rankling wounds from which its life-blood will issue. Justice claims observance equally with freedom as a means of establishing genuine fraternity among men. We are so constituted as to experience emotions of anger at the perpetration of wrong. These emotions are invariably excited when the offence is perceived, and in our present fallen condition they seldom confine themselves within proper bounds. These sentiments are not controlled by law. An enactment to legalize murder would fail to change our estimate of that crime, nor would a code of social regulations tending to place the intemperate and the sober on the same footing, have any power to make us regard such a step as otherwise than essentially unjust. It requires no great degree of foresight to predict that a community based upon the denial of such principles must prove an utter failure. If freedom and justice were banished, happiness would quickly follow them into exile. The halo of friendship which gathered round it in the heated imagination of its votaries would vanish as the morning cloud ; and the boasted paradise of social rights would soon be changed into a theatre of malignant passions, a nest of brawlers and a den of thieves.

The *fundamental error of Socialism* lies in assuming that human nature is morally perfect, and that all

social evils are chargeable solely on external circumstances ; losing sight of the fact that man is a fallen creature, and that *his* regeneration must precede the regeneration of society. The external world will always remain a faithful image of that which is unseen. There is nothing moral in the earth we tread, nor in the houses, palaces, factories and mechanisms which are the products and the instruments of human skill ; all moral schemes are begun and finished in the heart : leave the heart corrupt, and its creation will be polluted ; cleanse it, and they will be clean also ; fire man with benevolence, and every species of wretchedness will excite his pity ; arm him with justice, and not long will selfishness and rapacity be unsubdued. If all men were filled with the spirit of obedience to the golden rule, it would matter very little what social system prevailed ; and if that spirit of obedience to the Divine precept is wanting, the best system cannot supply the deficiency. Can Socialism change the heart ?—This is the sole question. Experience enables us to dispense with the confession of its abettors, that it is totally incompetent for the task. For this a Divine remedy is needed, principles which can pierce deeper and exert absolute mastery over the soul. A power is wanted which can battle successfully with selfishness, and allay the commotions of a troubled heart ; which can furnish motives from circumstances lying beyond the reach of human sight, and amidst the shallow, yet turbid waters of this present life, guide man's fragile bark by the pole-star of eternal truth. This power resides in the gospel, and there alone. Surrounded with the embodiments of our own

depravity, and perplexed at our own helplessness, we turn to Bethlehem, to find in the truths enunciated by the angelic voices which once echoed across its plains, the true way of establishing "peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

III. Hitherto we have contemplated the condition of the working classes in an exclusively secular point of view, and have formed an estimate of it in relation to matters of high, but not of the highest moment; we now proceed to examine THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION as beings at once fallen, responsible, and immortal, and as having within their reach the means of restoration disclosed in the gospel.

This question is overwhelmingly interesting, even if we confine our thoughts to the working classes themselves. If a single soul is of incalculable worth, if the misery involved in its possible ruin baffles conception, what arithmetic can compute the wreck of millions, what mind can grasp the collective consequences of their perdition? But the interest of the question is heightened when we consider the place which our working classes hold as members of the human family, and the powerful influence which their example will necessarily exert upon posterity. Should we ever become a nation of scoffers, what a curse shall we prove to the world! and how can we assure ourselves that such a fatal end will not be reached, if the bulk of the people have already started towards it? As a nation we shall be irreligious notwithstanding innumerable instances of piety, if the fear of God be not practically influential over our working men. Ten thousand sanctuaries set

apart for the purposes of Christian worship, ten thousand costly sacrifices laid upon the Christian altar, the homage paid by the legislature to the Christian name, —far more than this will be insufficient to make us a Christian nation, if the religion of Christ be denied a welcome in the hearts and homes of the people.

In discussing this question we shall endeavour, as accurately as possible, to determine *the position which the masses of the people hold in reference to Christianity*. According to the simplest principle of classification they are separable into three divisions, — the professed disciples of Christianity, its professed opponents, and those who occupy a neutral position. First in nearness to the religious point of view from which we take this survey stands *the class of Christian professors*. On beholding it we are struck with its small dimensions ; what a contrast does it furnish to the gigantic proportions of the other two ! A verdant spot in the midst of measureless deserts ; a strip of azure in the darkened sky ; a cliff-girt island, where the vintage ripens, while, far as eye can reach, the ocean rages round it ;—such is the professedly Christian section of the working classes. A few have yielded submission to Christ, but the vast majority are yet firm in their rebellion. Some have opened their hearts to the gospel message, but what are they compared with the multitude over whom the darkness of eternal misery yet lowers ? A small portion of the wilderness has been reclaimed, but outstretching on all sides lies the untilled desert.

Our Christian operatives, although they form an

insignificant section of the working classes, enter largely into the numerical strength of the British churches. Few when compared with the multitudes who make no profession, they are numerous when viewed as forming a part of those who do. They furnish the entire material of which no small number of Christian communities are composed, and there are few into which they do not enter as an important element of strength or weakness. A large portion of organized religious effort depends for its efficacy on them ; they necessarily wield, for good or evil, a vast moral power ; from them must proceed a large share of that manifestation of Christian principle which is intended to attract and win the world. Working men themselves, they find a readier and less suspected access to their brethren than any other class, and hence in them chiefly centre our hopes of bringing the bulk of the people under the influence of saving truth. If not the repositories of the church's wealth, they are the main sources of its strength, and according to the vigour or weaklieness of their piety, may we expect a future of triumphant aggression or of inglorious defeat.

It is important, therefore, to inquire into the kind of piety which distinguishes the professedly religious section of the working classes. It is this which must decide whether in their workshops and dwellings they will be the missionaries of the cross, or its mere adherents, distinguishable from others by nothing but a fairer name. We take it for granted that religion is not a business of mere impression. Moral impressions are required in conversion, but in order to be rendered permanent they must be either the cause or the effect

of intellectual principles. The soul is regenerated and sanctified through the medium of truth. It is in connexion with this agency that the omnipotent Spirit works. Religious truth must be truly and firmly grasped in order to the production of that moral power which purifies the heart; it must be apprehended, moreover, in its essential meaning; a technical belief will no more avail to sustain or enkindle piety than the most fugitive impressions. Genuine piety consists in the union of religious conviction and religious feeling, and rises in excellence as these elements become more copious and profound. Testing by these principles the current piety of the class of persons under review, in how many instances do we find it fall short of its healthy proportions—how often is it dwarfish, sickly, a mere shadow, an escutcheon hung up to show that the soul is dead! It is often nothing more than an arbitrary alliance between an hereditary creed, and feelings which have been casually aroused. Parental instruction, or the teaching of a sabbath school, communicated to the opening mind some general views of Christian truth, these were registered in the dogmatic and necessarily imperfect form in which they were conveyed, and constituted, as if by patent, the mind's unchangeable stock of theological knowledge. With the moral constitution which God has given us it is easy for the feelings to be aroused; conscience often arms the voice of the preacher, or the more affecting voice of death, with irresistible force; the powers of the world to come are for a time too powerful for "the strong man armed." At this period of fervid religious awakening the formulas of childhood are remembered. They are religious, so are the feelings of experienced alarm;

they are therefore joined together in a religious profession. But the connexion between the two is sapless, the binding together of a dead branch and a fragile flower. The feeling neither sprang from, nor led to, the apprehension of truth ; no truth was in fact *perceived*, for that technical belief is nothing. The cause of the excitement forgotten, the excitement itself soon ceases. It availed, during its brief existence, to bring him within the circle of the church, and there, by the mere force of inertness or external circumstances, he still remains : nominally living, really dead ; enrolled among the professed disciples of Christianity, with the most settled, though perhaps unconscious, alienation of heart from the doctrines which it teaches and the objects at which it aims.

Narrowing our view to those cases in which piety is not dubious, where the two elements of faith and love unquestionably exist, we find equally painful evidence of an imperfect apprehension and realization of revealed truth. The central doctrine of the gospel has been grasped with sufficient confidence to awaken hope of final safety, but it has not yet elevated the soul to a higher spiritual sphere. The Sun of righteousness has spread some illumination through its dark recesses, but it is as yet a stranger to that glowing effulgence beneath which the shadows of chaos finally disperse, and the Spirit of beauty dawns upon the new-made world. Momentary glimpses have been caught of truth's radiant vision, but that prolonged gaze beneath which the face brightens, like the face of Moses on the mount of God, and the pregnant germs of spiritual life are gradually expanded and matured, has yet to be exerted. It is

the province of contemplation to bring us face to face with solemn verities, to exhibit them in their essential grandeur, and arm them with living power; but this habit of mind is hardly known to the bulk of religious professors. Thus the objects and instrumentalities of the gospel are shorn of much of their lustre, and their moral efficacy is in consequence sadly diminished. Blindfold the eyes, or inflict on them some serious injury, and straightway darkness ensues; suspend the genial influences of the sky, let the earth no longer receive its accustomed share of light and heat, and it will soon become barren. Analogous evils spring from the cessation of those influences with which it is the chartered province of truth to supply the heart. Piety, in their absence, assumes a fixed and stunted form, and invariably hardens into a mere mechanism of rules and duties. The free and varied action of life is wanting, it is content with manifesting itself in old and recognised phases, but loftier exhibitions or more appropriate adaptations it cannot supply. Unaccustomed to view truth in the harmony of its internal relations, piety of this sort is apt to have its doctrinal preferences, and thus to distort and mutilate the gospel. Seldom conversing with its sublimer doctrines, and continually dwelling on those respecting which equally conscientious minds remain divided, it becomes cynical and bigoted, and finds its favourite sphere in the dissemination of party views. Influenced in all its actions by casual and inferior motives, its history is a series of fluctuations, and its entire relation to the church is daily in danger of being altered or destroyed. Thus, from the same pernicious source, the want of a steady intercourse with

truth, with the life and teachings of that Divine Person who is truth incarnate, proceed heresy, sectarianism, vacillation, languor; the types of nearly all that is spurious or weak in the piety of the Christian church.

Few things are more important, with a view to the success of Christianity, than the exhibition of its principles in the conduct of its professors. A loftier and purer morality should certainly distinguish those who profess to be the followers of the Holy One, and to have felt the regenerating influence of the Divine Spirit, than ordinarily obtains among those who make no such professions. By producing this distinction it was intended that Christianity should prove herself Divine; it was intended that the lips of the scoffer should be silenced by arguments against which even the shafts of ridicule are pointless; that the profane and unbelieving should be awed to reverence by the majesty of her virtues; that the world should be won by the loveliness of the church. Such objects were fully realized in the deportment of Christ. His conduct drew from friends and foes a tribute of involuntary homage. He did "not strive nor cry," yet wickedness trembled at his presence, the pharisee felt even his rigid formalism outdone by the simple garb of goodness, and hypocrisy stole away abashed from the light of his withering glance. To *live out* Christ, to be what Christ was, to force a similar confession from the world, should be the aim of all his followers. Are the working classes of this country familiar with such a manifestation of superior excellence? Do they behold in the conduct of their professedly Christian associates something which unequivocally proves them to be actuated by higher motives

than themselves? Do they see in the followers of Christ stainless honour, freedom from the breath of meanness, rectitude beyond the possibility of suspicion, uncompromising honesty, unswerving faithfulness, invincible amiableness of temper, manifested in the unvarying exercise of forbearance, gentleness, and love? Do they ever find themselves the objects of earnest yet delicate anxiety; are they spoken to on religious matters with that deep yet manly concern which would compel a friendly hearing; are they accompanied to their homes, invited to the sanctuary, plied with alternate counsel, exhortation, and entreaty in order to win them to the truth? Christian working men! these are questions for you to answer; what reply shall be given? All this, consistency requires from the representatives of the church; are they generally rendering it? Even charity is forced to acquiesce in saying, No! Many exceptions may be found, but they are not sufficiently numerous to affect the accuracy of a suspicion that the working classes do not generally behold in their professedly Christian associates an example clearly and decidedly superior to their own. Their conduct is marked of course by freedom from the grosser vices, and by an observance, more or less exemplary, of the outward ordinances of religion; but this negative species of excellence falls far short of manifesting, in their full power, the moral tendencies of Christianity; by virtues nobler than these must the hearts of mankind be won!

Before the working classes within the professing church can be brought to occupy a right position in reference to those who are without, the church itself must undergo a change in its entire condition. It is to

be apprehended, that the moral inefficiency which is exemplified in the conduct of one section of religious professors is traceable to causes which neutralize, to some extent, the piety of all. If Christianity is to act with augmented power upon the world, its influence must become more absolute and more easily cognizable in those who have yielded obedience to its claims. If religious example is to become more highly counter-active of the tendency to moral putrefaction which prevails, its seasoning qualities must be made stronger. The holy fire must burn with augmented force and brilliancy within the temple, if its radiations are to traverse a wider sphere, and diffuse around a larger amount of light and heat. A more intimate and experimental realization of Christian truth is the only way of compassing this happy change. The doctrines of the gospel once perceived, not as logical abstractions, but as life-giving verities, not as the limbs of an intellectual system, but as living emanations from the Spirit of truth; and the unearthly nature in believers would be born anew. Sympathies hitherto unfelt would swell into conscious being, the impulses and appetencies of Christian principle would become more delicate, bold, and comprehensive, filling a larger circle and bringing to bear upon every point within it a more intensely regenerative power. When the church shall have reached this higher position, the working classes within its pale will be known in the cottage, the factory, the mine, the workshop, as the missionaries of the cross. Presenting in their own conduct an unimpeachable exposition of the truth they urge on the acceptance of others; intelligent, but armed with the mightier

energies of piety ; prompt in everything which calls for a righteous and benevolent response, but chiefly intent upon commending to all within their reach the glorious gift of heaven ; they will imperceptibly pervade the cold chaotic mass around with the leaven of Christian love. A manifestation of the blessings religion has conferred upon themselves will disarm objections, and under the influence of that Spirit who never fails to bless the practical unfoldings of his own work within the heart, will win the most alien and intractable to “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

We now proceed to consider a section of the working classes in most respects the opposite of that which has just been noticed,—we allude to *the professed opponents of Christianity*. It is needless to prove that this section comprises in it a large and perhaps increasing number of individuals. Unhappily the fact is notorious, that a considerable proportion of our working population are the avowed abettors of unbelief. It will be more in keeping with our present object to endeavour to estimate accurately the nature and seat of the disease, to point out the circumstances which have induced or aggravated it, and the mode of treatment by which it may most successfully be assailed. Generally speaking, the infidelity of the working classes is a moral rather than an intellectual disorder ; it has its seat in the heart rather than in the head. All unbelief springs less or more remotely from moral causes ; it is the offspring of reason distorted and darkened by the affections ; but with the infidelity of the working classes this is peculiarly the case. In the

majority of cases it was conceived and matured by the feelings long before it sought a form and warrant in the mind. It often exists without being attached to any specific opinions, the mind is filled with one huge, immovable prejudice, which distinctly refuses to give any account of its origin, or to throw its insinuations into a logical shape. This is the simplest and most general form of infidelity; it may be regarded as the common foundation on which its numerous varieties are built, the kind of superstructure which may be raised upon it depending on peculiarities of individual character and intelligence. With thousands it remains a mere prejudice, undefined, airy, indefensible, and yet beyond the reach of regular intellectual assault. It resembles the heroes of romance, who, though slain one moment, would appear alive the next as gay and confident as ever. Still, opinion is the natural garb of unbelief, and with this there is generally an effort to invest it. Hence the avidity with which systems of infidelity are seized when first offered. Inexperienced spectators might imagine that in every instance their adoption had been preceded by a process of calm inquiry into their merits. Nothing could be more fallacious. They are generally adopted, not because impartial inquiry seems to demonstrate their truth, but because they seem to embody in precise terms a sentiment which has long been entertained, and offer a theoretic justification of it to the world.

The presence or absence of specific opinions, together with the ability or the inability to defend them, divides the adherents of infidelity into two classes; those of the former add opinion to prejudice, those of the

latter are swayed by prejudice alone. We will notice these classes separately, endeavouring to ascertain the character and views of each. We notice first *those who are capable of broaching their infidelity in a logical form, and of defending it with arguments.* Respecting many individuals of this class, their rejection of what we believe to be the only means of making man pure and happy clothes them with additional interest. The critical position they occupy in the face of heaven, and our anxiety to rescue them from what we deem pernicious errors, increases rather than diminishes our desire to do them ample justice. Intellectually considered they are the aristocracy of the working classes. By dint of unwearied and self-denying effort they have acquired an amount of information which places them far in advance of the class to which, in other respects, they belong; and would enable them to sustain an advantageous comparison with thousands in the ranks above them. They have attained to general historic views; the shifting scenes which make up the drama of the past are beheld in their mutual connexion, and in their bearings upon modern times. They have inquired into the theory of government, the rights of man, and the laws of trade, and on these subjects they have adopted settled opinions, which they are able speciously, if not soundly to defend. They have a general acquaintance with science, especially with physiology, astronomy and geology; their knowledge in these departments, though little more than technical, is sufficient to open wide fields for the exercise of thought, and to administer a healthful stimulus to their mental powers. The general result of this intellectual superiority is an indisposition to merely

sensual pleasures, the formation of sanguine views respecting man's natural capacity for improvement, and an enthusiastic readiness to co-operate with everything which seems calculated to promote his temporal well-being. Hence they are generally foremost in the popular movements of the age. Whatever promises a measure of social and political reform is sure at once of gaining their hearty adherence. They are often total abstainers from intoxicating drinks, conspicuous members of mechanic institutions, indefatigable promoters of benefit and other societies which tend to improve the economical condition of the working classes ; in short, they are usually the patrons of every ameliorative change which does not necessarily include religion. Towards this they are animated with an inveterately hostile sentiment, which they variously manifest by a patronizing, but exceptional, approbation, by worn-out witticisms, or malicious rancour.

Thus, in several points of view, speculative infidelity, as it exists among some of the working classes, presents an amiable exterior. Its opinions are calculated to tell with pernicious effect upon the multitude, who are at the same time disposed to receive them, and unable to form a just estimate of their intellectual value. As a phenomenon, however, it is far from being incapable of explanation, it may be easily solved by referring to the mental and moral growth of its abettors. Their rejection of Christianity, instead of being singular, was antecedently probable. The character of their mental processes, the circumstances under which they were carried on, together with external influences of a social kind, will fully account for it. In the first place, very few

have examined the peculiar evidences of Christianity, they have never fairly and dispassionately argued out the case on its own merits, they have contented themselves with beholding religion through the distorted medium of human character, instead of calmly looking for its image in the glass of truth. All the impressions with which they now view it might be traced, one by one, to some professed, and perhaps caricatured, exhibition of it in the institutions or conduct of men; not one has been derived at first hand from intercourse with religion itself. Their theological knowledge is composed of those notices, always incidental and sometimes unfriendly, which are to be met with in books on general subjects; the Bible, as at once the standard and the storehouse of religious truth, has never been explored, and while every penny pamphlet avowedly hostile to it is eagerly sought for, its host of champions and commentators, its Lelands, its Butlers, its Watsons, its Paleys, and its Chalmerses, remain unread. Such partiality exhibited in the admission of evidence would be enough, if proved in any other branch of human inquiry, to set aside the verdict; but there are circumstances in this case which shake our confidence in the jurors themselves. The general tendency of their efforts in the work of self-improvement has resulted rather in the acquisition of knowledge than in the discipline of their mental powers, in stimulating the perceptive rather than in strengthening the logical faculty. Intent on gaining information, they have overlooked the conditions of knowing and the general laws of thought. The little knowledge of a metaphysical kind they have acquired, has been gained in the sensational school, the tendency of whose doctrines

is to beget a sense of self-sufficiency, and to make inquiry coarsely dogmatic. The consequences of this vicious training are evident; both in their oral and written effusions, they betray excessive ignorance of the necessary limitations of human knowledge, and of the rules which govern the worth of evidence. They show a preference in reasoning for what is gross and tangible, and seem incapable of dealing with what is individual and minute. They are apt to attach undue weight to arguments which arise from separate facts, to the disparagement of those, less easy perhaps to grasp, but far more conclusive, which spring from the accumulation of many. In all cases, they perceive the separate parts of an argument more readily than the consequential force which necessitates the conclusion.

On examining the knowledge they have acquired we shall find it vitiated with kindred defects. It is extensive rather than accurate, discursive rather than profound. Sometimes it has been acquired in one direction only, in which case its comparative value is exaggerated, and those important relations lost sight of which subsist between the various divisions of the field of facts. Sometimes it has comprised principles which are only relatively true, and been chiefly confined to those discoveries in science which have made most noise in consequence of their opposition to prevailing opinions. This partial kind of knowledge is more favourable to scepticism than any other, since it gives an air of uncertainty, empiricism, and incompleteness to the whole aspect of human research. The very mode in which this knowledge has been acquired, that of self-tuition, exposes them to influences which cannot be deemed happy. One of the many advantages

of being placed under a competent preceptor is the tendency which it has to induce a lowly estimate of our own acquisitions. The master is to the boy a full reservoir of all possible knowledge. The accomplished professor of classical literature or natural science is to his pupils the ideal of erudition and research ; he stands on the apex of the pyramid and touches the sky. Inaccurate as this impression may be in regard to the individual, its general influence is true and salutary. The teacher personifies the boundless realms of thought. In him absolute knowledge daily reads a lesson of humility to the expanding mind. The spirit of his instructions draws aside the veil which shrouds the majesty of science, and shows the young aspirant that the highest attainments and sublimest discoveries are but the approximation of a few inches towards her stargirt throne. Such a course of training naturally results in diffidence, caution, modesty, carefulness in the use of positive assertions, the habit of weighing well all that can bear upon the accuracy of a conclusion, before raising it to the status of fixed opinion. Self-tuition has an opposite tendency ; shall it therefore be frowned upon ? Not till we proclaim the sun a nuisance for the exhalations which it raises from the surface of a stagnant pool. Self-tuition successfully prosecuted, argues the existence of a high order of intellectual and moral powers, and gives an individual a fair claim to honourable regard ; but it is indisputable that without the exercise of special care, the influence it exerts on the formation of character and the acquisition of moral truth, is not exclusively propitious. These peculiarities in the mental training of our working classes would not have had, under all

conceivable circumstances, the same disastrous issue. We can conceive of social conditions in which all these defects would have been arrayed on the opposite side, and the proneness to error which they involve have become, by accident, tributary to the cause of religion. Whatever external hindrances impede the progress of Christianity it is incumbent on us to remove; meanwhile it is important to have brought to light those subjective causes which arm the prejudices that may be entertained against it with such destructive power, and render so many of our working men voluntary victims of the shallowest delusions.

The speculative character of the infidelity which exists at any given time among the mass of the people always bears a certain relation to the predominant philosophy of the age. The two seldom exactly correspond, but the one always follows in the wake of the other. Sometimes the sequence takes place after so long an interval, that the philosophic doctrines have passed into neglect, before they have succeeded in modifying the popular sentiments; the upper regions of the sky have grown serene and bright before the elements of warfare have burst upon a lower sphere. The infidelity at present existing among the working classes is no exception to this principle; it is intimately allied to philosophic doctrines which were in ascendancy half a century ago. Some little colouring has been imparted to it by the attempted appropriation of geological facts, a few slight modifications in matters of detail have been effected by the socialist theories which belong exclusively to the present day, but most that is speculative in its constitution must be ascribed to that

arrogant and sensual philosophy which reached its zenith about the close of the last century. The flood of materialism which then threatened to swamp the foundations of morality and religion had its rise in the misrepresentations and perversions which were imposed on the writings of our own illustrious Locke, by his French commentators. The thoughts of our great countryman, sensualized and deadened by Condillac, were the stage on which Voltaire played off his garish sophistries. Under the Ixion-wings of this arch-scoffer atheism ventured to laugh in open day, enthroned her beastly mummeries in the sight of heaven, and uttered boasts, which common sense, if left unfettered, would have laughed to scorn. The infidel offspring of materialism have been slain, its worthies hang unharnessed on the walls of Zion, and testify by their mouldering limbs the temper of the Christian blade. Materialism itself has begun to recede before the stealthy march of principles which its own enormities have evoked, and the days of its stay in the temple of science are already numbered. Meanwhile, Paine is a text-book with the people—exploded arguments are reiterated by the working man in utter ignorance that the departed champions of his creed would be ashamed to use them. A show of fighting is still kept up, while, if they did but know it, their ensigns are cut down, their entrenchments forced, and their camp taken. In an intellectual point of view, popular infidelity, as it at present exists, is a phantom which must vanish before the clearer light and healthier spirit of coming times. Danger threatens us from another quarter. A more subtle and powerful foe is already

entering the field. Pantheism, in one shape or other, is the demoniac possession of the age. Receding infidelity saw God in nothing, the infidelity with which we shall shortly have to contend sees God in everything, and here, as elsewhere, extremes meet. Teutonic mysticisms are breathed upon us in borrowed numbers. Men have brought into use again the ancient tripod, they claim inspiration for their ambiguous "utterances," and clothe themselves with the tattered garment of the seer. Paganism revives once more,—eclectic liberalism recalls her into life—her withered forms are breaking through the incrustations of twenty centuries, her temples rise at Delphi and Dodona, her statues start from dust, and take their stand beside their ancient altars. Rest, Julian! thy mantle has fallen on the modern prophet; peace to the heroes of Valhalla! redress shall come at length to the wrongs of Thor and Odin; a brighter day is dawning, when Europe shall return in penitence to her oaken forests, her human hecatombs, her wicker cages, and her druid shrines. Happily, this danger is at present only lowering in the horizon, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. The harpers harp never so wisely, but our Saxon senses are too dull to catch the syren strain. The utterances of transcendental wisdom have hitherto been confined to a select circle of admirers, and few even of them have grasped the principles by which they are inspired. The mass of the people are yet, and must for some time remain, untainted with this leprosy, their disease is of a less dangerous complexion; now is the time to effect their cure, to develop their mental energies, and promote a healthy circulation in the

spiritual system; in a word, to assist them in gaining an experimental realization of substantial truth, that when the dogmas of Pantheism are presented for their acceptance, they may have discernment and strength enough to write them down in the category of fictitious follies.

A tolerable measure of intelligence is required for the sustenance of speculative scepticism; it can neither exist in midday splendour, nor yet in the darkness of midnight; it luxuriates in those twilight shades which wrap the border-land of knowledge. But infidelity is more extensive than even this moderate degree of intelligence; we should expect, therefore, to find it existing extensively in an *emotional as well as a logical form*. This expectation would be justified by actual acquaintance with the religious condition of the working classes. Such acquaintance would detect among them the existence of a vast amount of scepticism which it would be impossible to reduce to any system; a sort of floating bullion of unbelief, fusible into any shape, and applicable to any purpose. Infidelity of this kind never courts the day, it seldom ventures abroad in a categorical form, it shows itself in vague but powerful sympathies, is echoed in shrewd suspicions, welcomes every kindred sentiment with brotherly ardour, says yes to every charge, however false, which is levelled against Christianity, but seems incapable of assuming any position against which reason could direct an argument. Its stronghold is the heart; bulwarked with *prejudice*, and moated in with floods of poisoned passion, it thence defies alike the calm and the boldest assaults of truth.

In reference to this mass of unreasoning scepticism, the great question is, How can it have been produced? Probably no single cause will adequately account for it. To some extent it may be ascribed to the natural enmity of the depraved mind to the principles of a pure religion, but this is felt to offer no explanation of the specific character of the effect. The most casual observer must feel convinced that a portion of it is due to circumstances altogether unconnected with religion. Without supposing any change to be made in the fundamental principles of society, it is possible to conceive of social circumstances in which, to say the least, the gospel could be offered to the working man with a much greater probability of his accepting it than it can now. This may be conceded without the special impeachment of any section of the community; but whatever the consequence might be, stern truth would require its concession. That the condition of a large section of the working classes of this country is not calculated to inspire them with friendly feelings towards Christianity we cannot but regard as an indubitable historic fact. Every part of the world is stirring with the enterprises of British capital, our merchants are literally princes, they hold the empire of the east, their sceptre sways the financial world. At home what a glittering and costly fabric has been reared! What colossal affluence bestrides the land! luxury revels in a thousand halls, the gilded forms of pomp and power are daily flitting before the people's eyes. Meanwhile what are the scenes which might be contemplated in the cellars, the garrets, the cottages of the poor? There life and death contend in uncertain struggles. Obscurity covers there from

the world's eye many a scene of misery which would shame and sicken it. There the labourer, denied the boon of toil, endeavours to cheer his pining family with hopes which he does not feel. There the sempstress plies her ill-paid work, snatching from life itself the means of sustaining its existence ; happier even in her poverty than those in whose bosoms all hope has become extinct, and who in that desperate crisis, when reason almost fails, have deemed death less terrible than dishonour. Such are the extremes of British society ; what must be the moral effect of their proximate co-existence ? What can we suppose will be the theology and the ethics of starvation ? When the artisan has tried his last resource, and returns without success to the bosom of his anxious family, what will he be tempted to think of the equity of that Providence which has poured thousands upon thousands into the coffers of his neighbour ? It is our happiness to be acquainted with some to whom the want of "the bread which perisheth" has been made the means of communicating the richest spiritual blessings, and who, when charity unexpectedly opened the door of their dwelling, have been found, surrounded with a weeping family, upon their knees. But such cases are very rare, poverty more frequently hardens than softens ; the man who is extremely poor is exposed far more than they whose circumstances are easy, to contractedness of feeling, to that combination of envy, hatred, and suspicion which are the chief elements of religious scepticism. Talk to him of the Divine goodness, he is slow to believe it. He listens more readily to the counsel of Job's wife. His dark imagination sees no justice in the world, and

therefore no moral government, if indeed a God. The sentiments which sap his faith in the doctrines of natural religion make still easier work with his Christianity. The greater goodness which the plan of redemption unfolds is still more repugnant to his belief. The spiritual wants which it promises to supply take no hold upon his deadened sympathies. The system which offers him spiritual blessings seems deaf and dumb in reference to his temporal necessities. Christianity, as he beholds it, is the guardian of property, the companion of senators and princes, the nurseling of wealth and fashion; but for him she has shed no tear, to him she has vouchsafed no smile, in the hour of his need she extended to him no helping hand. Infidelity whispers that her claims are unfounded, her piety an imposture, her chief business to secure a lucrative income to the "priesthood," and rivet more closely the chains of political power. There is sweetness in the lie—its very malignity soothes his cankered soul. He henceforth broods over it, as if in revenge for his fancied wrongs; it imperceptibly becomes a part of himself, till at length the gospel is instinctively hated as the symbol, and its ministers as the agents of oppression. Cruel falsehood! Cruel the circumstances which have produced it!

Between a profession of religion on the one hand, and open infidelity on the other, there stretches a wide and anomalous region which we will now proceed to examine. In doing so we will first notice its general features, and then consider the several shades of feeling and opinion which mark out its chief divisions. *Reli-*

gious ignorance is the most general characteristic of that numerous section of the working classes who make no direct profession. Whatever the attitude they stand in towards Christianity, whether it be one of indifference or of morbid regard, they are utter strangers to its meaning and purpose. This ignorance is not merely moral; it is more than that want of experimental knowledge which is common to all unrenewed men; they do not comprehend it intellectually. They have no idea of the specific difference which distinguishes Christianity from other religious systems, nor even that such systems have, or ever had existence. They have no intelligent view of the place it holds in the Divine economy, of the purposes it is designed to attain, nor of the moral instrumentality which has been set apart for its promotion. Their conceptions of the preliminary principles of the scheme of redemption are very feeble and indistinct. The fallen condition of man, the absolute claims of Divine justice, the inevitable doom of the transgressor, awaken a very languid recognition in their hearts. They doubtless feel that sense of guilt which is inseparable from the commission of sin, and are often perplexed by those questions which guilt invariably whispers to the soul; but they never understood that Christianity aspired to solve those questions, it was never beheld by them in the light of an answer dictated by heaven to man's stricken conscience. Relatively to them it occupies a much lower status,—an earthly institution regarded with religious feelings; at best a mere code of morality, or a set of sapless traditions. The relation which the Redeemer sustains to us as our Mediator with the Father, as the exclusive channel of

pardon, as producing in us, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, a new nature, is utterly unknown. Their beliefs have undergone hardly any change by being brought into contact with the gospel. Their religion is in reality the religion of nature, an imperfect Theism under the guise of Christian names. Their hopes in the prospect of futurity are purely Pagan,—melancholy rays emitted from that twilight of despair which Christianity was sent to enlighten. In the presence of death, the absolute goodness of the Infinite is their only stay, and as mere experience leaves this view of his character somewhat doubtful, their latter end is agitated by the foresight of a thousand perils, and is at best but a decorous closing with destiny. If pushed to it, the confession, “I am a sinner,” is readily made, and perhaps a profession of hope in Christ may be associated with it; little penetration, however, is required to discover that these are mere scraps of an hereditary creed, with which their real sentiments have no more vital connexion than the fruits of the tropics with the Christmas holly which they are sometimes made to adorn.

Where there is no comprehension of these vital questions, *we have no right to expect intelligence in matters of detail, and on these accordingly we find the grossest ignorance prevail.* But Christianity, as it is embodied in the creeds and parties of the present day, is inexplicable without some reference to the past. To an individual entirely unacquainted with the various steps by which its present position has been reached, the numberless divisions which exist among its professors, the opposite opinions which cluster alike beneath

its name, and the apparently hostile attitude of different churches, all of which are professedly embarked in the same cause, present to the spectator a scene of hopeless confusion. This want of acquaintance with the previous history of Christianity is characteristic of a large proportion of the working classes. The steps which were taken by its first disciples to insure its propagation, the peculiar influences to which it was exposed from Judaism on the one side, and from paganism on the other, its subsequent establishment as the religion of the Roman empire, and the deterioration which rapidly developed itself in the morals and doctrines of its professors ; the restless and reckless ambition which led to the establishment of the papal power, the causes which, the moment it reached its zenith, precipitated its decline, and the decisive blow which was dealt to it by the hands of Luther ; the origin of the various sections of British Protestantism, the circumstances which prolong their separation, and the principles which give them, in the midst of apparent schism, an infrangible unity—on these, and kindred topics, very often no information whatever exists. Such ignorance issues in great evils, vast masses of the people are liable, in consequence of it, to become the dupes of specious misrepresentation,—they have no safeguard against the exaggerations of party zeal. If Luther is reviled, they straightway endorse the libel ; if told that the quarrel of Henry VIII. with the pope is the sum and substance of the English Reformation, they have no refuge from the falsehood in historic fact, and may be excused for thinking that any act of a man who bears such a character as tradition ascribes to that monarch, may with wisdom be

revoked. Instinct, it is true, generally ranges ignorance on the side of received opinions, but its fidelity can never be trusted ; it is a blinded Samson, one hour usefully employed, the next engaged in tearing society from its basis. But the greatest evil which springs from religious ignorance is the suspicion it is apt to engender respecting the truths of Christianity. Many imagine that "to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes, there must attach a general uncertainty ;" the opposite doctrines, which are broached with equal confidence by its professors, seem to annihilate each other, leaving nothing on which the mind can unhesitatingly repose. The Bible, which ought to have served as an infallible standard of appeal, is itself caught up in the vortex of controversy. Happily, however, a degree of popular deference is still paid to the sacred volume which, if seasonably improved, may lead to the happiest results ; but even this deference is often unsustained by knowledge ; it is a traditional belief, a stranded remnant of a wreck, which may keep its place in ordinary weather, but which the first storm that rises may carry to the depths of the ocean.

Religious ignorance is the common basis of several manifestations of the popular mind, which are alien from true piety. Of these, *indifference* and *superstition* are the most striking. It is not a matter of chance which of these two forms it shall in any instance assume ; every set of circumstances in which an individual can be placed, as well as every variety of mental temperament, has a determinate leaning to one rather than the other. In some men independence of character is a conspicuous trait, those qualities which belong

peculiarly to themselves are most strikingly developed, their will is naturally firm and energetic in its resolves. In like manner, of the numerous external influences to which the minds of men are exposed, some have a tendency to bring out and strengthen this individuality of character, while others have a tendency to depress it. According as religious ignorance is found in union with the former of these mental temperaments and social influences, or with the latter, it terminates in indifference or in superstition.

Indifference is the ordinary town dress of impiety. It is that aspect of it with which we are most familiar in the language and demeanour of the operative population. It is this which speaks its meaning in the face of the working man when he is casually reminded of religion. His countenance, if rendered vocal, would say, "I see nothing in it." Such is the language of indifference; it is irrefragable because it is absurd. It is less vulnerable than scepticism. The latter, confessing Christianity, if true, to be of infinite moment, confines itself to the canvassing of its claims; the former, admitting that it is all which it professes to be, sets it down as worthless. Argument can be confuted, the champion of error can be set right, but this blind indifference is invincible. If Christianity were seen in its true import; if the sum of its declarations respecting the moral condition of man and the intentions of God towards him were fully understood; if, in a word, Christianity were *known*, the absurdity of treating it with indifference would be laid bare. Men would then perceive that it has to do with them as individuals, that it professes to bestow upon them bless-

ings of inconceivable worth, and that it must either be rejected as absolutely unworthy of trust, or be thankfully accepted as the only way of escape from "the wrath to come." The intellectual grasping of its doctrines might prove the means, in the hands of the Divine Spirit, of subduing the heart, and at least something would be gained in forcing impiety to assume an attitude which would make it more easily assailable by the arms of truth.

Superstition is the impiety of a weak and obsequious mind. It is usually found associated with a morbid moral sensitiveness, an imagination disproportionately active, and with an enfeebled state of the practical powers. It is the rural garb of irreligion. In the wear and tear of city life, and the perpetual thronging and collision of men, it is apt to be destroyed; but in rural solitude, aided by the greater degree of ignorance, and the more vivid sense of dependence which there exist, it sends its fibres deep into the soul, and spreads over it a continually widening and deepening gloom. Superstition, as a spiritual disease, consists in the application of inadequate remedies to the felt wants of our moral nature. It has a true and false element in its composition—it recognises our fallen state; so far it is true: it trusts in a fanciful method of recovery—so far it is false. A consciousness of guilt lies at its foundation, and imaginary methods of deliverance form its superstructure. A belief in ritual efficacy is the phase it often assumes; it places reliance in certain prescribed forms, in the due repetition of certain prayers, or in the reception of the Christian ordinances at the hand of an accredited minister. To this is sometimes added

a confidence in the special agency of invisible beings, or the personal possession of supernatural powers. In every case, however, the end controls the means. The soul aims at possessing a persuasion of its spiritual safety, and whatever instrumentality, whether of a physical or moral kind, is requisite for securing that object, is heartily believed in. Superstition is the soul's attempt to remedy its disorders by its own inventions ; hence ignorance of the gospel is the necessary condition of its existence, and acquaintance with the gospel its infallible antidote. Once let the doctrines of Christianity be apprehended, once let the benevolence of the Divine intentions, and the nature of the Saviour's mediatorial work be clearly seen, and there will be no room left for superstition. The wounded conscience will perceive in "Christ crucified" an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and will scatter to the winds its tissue of subjective follies.

We have thus taken a rapid survey of the religious condition of the working classes ; we have marked the chief forms in which the principle of impiety exists among them, whether it be a weak and unintelligent profession, avowed infidelity, or that ignorance of religious truth which shows itself in indifference and superstition. Those evils are not inactive, they germinate and bring forth fruit. We behold their baneful consequences in every department of social life. *Our sanctuaries are often deserted* : beautiful and commodious structures occupy the most conspicuous sites throughout the land, the sabbath-bell proclaims the hour of prayer, human art unites with the sanctions of religion to invite the footsteps of the worshipper ; pious,

talented, and devoted men are ready to preach the word of life to assembled thousands; but all in vain. A respectable, and in some instances, a numerous auditory may be present, but they do not fairly represent the community, they present no sample of the current thoughts and habits of the people. In many assemblies it would occasion surprise for a working man, not connected with them by profession or family ties, to make his appearance. The multitude flows in another direction, where nothing reminds them of the Divine presence, and where the voice of the preacher is never heard.

Not only are our sanctuaries deserted, but *the sabbath itself is frequently given up to desecration*. That sacred day which God has set apart for himself, which is sanctified by the sublimest and most cheering associations, and which has continued through so many ages the type and harbinger of eternal rest; this institution, whose maintenance is enforced by the weightiest obligations, and is commended to us as a signal proof of the Divine beneficence to man, is perverted from its holy ends, robbed of its distinctive sanctity, and virtually incorporated with the hours of toil. With great numbers it is a day of pleasure, a day for visiting, feasting, or rambling. On the sabbath they display unwonted activity, a set of sensibilities, hitherto dormant, seem then to be called into action; the thirst for sensual gratifications, rendered ungovernable by six days' restraint, is now clamorous for enjoyment. Social agencies favour its indulgence, railway companies lower their fares, contrive trips of fifty or sixty miles, and to avert the possible charge of

impiety, engage that pleasure seekers shall be enabled to attend public worship, *as well as bathe and amuse themselves*, before they return at night ! Innumerable other facilities are offered for furthering the business of desecration, every species of vehicle is in motion, every thoroughfare is crowded, every village within a moderate distance of town, is filled to overflowing. Parks, gardens, saloons, and beer-shops are all alive with merriment. Religion seems to have bidden farewell to society, and for one day in seven to have confined herself exclusively to the house of prayer, leaving the multitude outside to pursue, without interruption, their conspiracy against the rights of God.

The same hostility to religion which is seen in sabbath profanation is also displayed in *the disposition which is everywhere evinced to cry down all specially religious aims and motives*. Benevolent objects must be now prosecuted on other grounds, they must be made as earthly as possible before they will excite a general sympathy in their favour. Economic considerations, philanthropy, politics, all these obtain a much higher meed of public approbation as principles of public conduct than religion. The open profession of religious motives always abates something of the vociferous applause which greets a leader of the people ; it awakes suspicion, gives a cast of weakness to his character, and is regarded as a foible to be borne with on account of other excellences, rather than as an additional title to their confidence. Religion is becoming more and more widely dissevered from the various forms of social good ; society, at every fresh advance, seems to proclaim it useless. Religious principles have no visible connexion

with popular objects; every temporal want may be satisfied without their aid, they are therefore voted impertinent, very well for "good people," but useless for the world. A modification of these feelings is the medium through which professing Christians of all parties are viewed by the working classes. *The church of Christ is regarded by the people without confidence and without respect.* A wide alienation of feeling exists between them which often reaches the pitch of rancorous malignity. The ministers of religion, as a class, stand at the lowest point of popularity, their vocation is regarded as useless, their motives are set down as venal, every action which emanates from them is exposed to systematic misrepresentation. If they confine their labours within the circle marked out by a very narrow interpretation of pastoral duty, they are reviled as indolent; if they extend their labours beyond, they are stigmatized as anxious to make proselytes. Without much distinction as to the doctrines they preach, or the source whence they derive their incomes, their occupations are denounced as unpropitious to freedom, and an encumbrance to the State.

It is only natural to expect, in connexion with the general antipathy which is thus manifested towards religion, *increasing demoralization of social manners.* When the Divine law is constantly slighted in any of its commands, disobedience to the rest is rendered a mere matter of prudence; they may or may not be broken, but at least obedience is not induced by a sense of duty. When God is practically denied, the depravity of the heart is left to grow unchecked, and will not fail to develop and mature itself in every

species of baneful passion. These remarks are a mere comment on the morals of the age ; we see a feeble recognition of the Deity in every walk of life ; no such thoughts of him are abroad as can administer an effectual check to impiety, or work out the regeneration of social life. Drunkenness abounds, unchastity is regarded as a venial sin, frightful crimes are of common occurrence, and the flood of pollution sweeps along with ever increasing volume and velocity.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon these manifestations of popular irreligion ; they are too notorious to be questioned. The real evil with which we have to deal lies not in them, but in the principles from which they emanate,—*in impiety, not as it is evinced in the conduct, but as it is throned upon the heart.* An external reformation would be a poor achievement if it did not spring from purified sources of action : it would be useless, were it possible, to exact a larger measure of outward respect for Christianity or any of its institutions, while the same sentiments of bitter enmity continued to be cherished within. In morals as well as in physics it is a merciful arrangement that morbid symptoms usually indicate the presence of disease. In both cases it is infinitely better that the countenance should be disfigured, or that some limb should be deprived awhile of its healthy action, than that a fatal disorder should secretly prey upon the vitals, and give no signal that it had commenced its ravages but the death of the victim. What our working classes *are*, that may they *appear* to be : whatever evil exists among them, may that evil be presented to the public eye with a vividness of colouring fully equal to its intrinsic

heinousness ! External symptoms are harmless in themselves, while they act as a useful guide in applying the remedy. The great question which lies for solution before the church of Christ, and which presses for solution with increasing urgency, is, not how this or that instance of impiety may be corrected, but how impiety itself may be extinguished ; not how a more strict observance may be secured to any of the institutions of Christianity, but how Christianity itself, in its life-giving power, as the sovereign channel of pardon, purity, and happiness, may be made the welcomed inmate of every cottage in the land. How is this to be done ? How is religion to be made absolutely supreme in the hearts of its professors ? How are the cavils of infidelity to be silenced, and those mists of sceptical prejudice, which darken and benumb society, to be dispersed ? How shall the ignorant and the depraved be brought to confess the grandeur of the spiritual economy under which they live, and render willing obedience to the Prince of peace ? Is this a consummation too blissful to be realized ? Is it too large a blessing for faith to supplicate at the hand of God ? Does it transcend the measure of his goodness, the grandeur of his designs, or the capability of his appointed means ? Does the prospect of its reception portray a single scene which has not already been depicted by the prophetic pen, or involve a single element of success which the Divine promises are not pledged to bestow ? No ! the impiety which moves around us is formidable to ourselves alone. The arm of God is still omnipotent, his word is not bound, his Spirit is still unlimited in its ability to quicken and

sanctify the souls of men ; those purposes of mercy, which are large enough to embrace the salvation of the world, assuredly include within them the spiritual recovery of our native isle. What, though religion be scoffed at, and the feeble ties which have hitherto secured to her a meed of popular allegiance seem well-nigh snapped asunder, the greatness of the emergency is fully equalled by the appliances with which it can be met. With the Bible in their hands, and the love of God within their hearts, her champions may court the conflict. Let but Divine truth be faithfully diffused and fearlessly applied, and not a single British home shall long remain unvisited by the glorious gospel.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCIPLES AND MEANS WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO
SECURE THE ELEVATION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

IN the preceding chapter we endeavoured to take a comprehensive view of the condition of the working classes. In the prosecution of that design we became acquainted with the existence of many evils which call loudly for removal, and which cannot be suffered to continue much longer without seriously impeaching the philanthropy of the age. In glancing at their personal and domestic condition we noticed a deficiency in point of general comfort, such as must militate very powerfully against the enjoyments, the uses, and the duration of life ; such a laxity in the family relations as must greatly tend to defeat the beneficent purposes contemplated in their institution ; and such an absence of intelligent views and refined habits, as must prove formidably detrimental to the interests of morality and religion. In surveying the attitude they maintain in reference to existing society, we detected in it a permanent expression of discontent ; softened, it is true, by the influence of prosperous times, but rendered deeper by the pressure of distress, and continually seeking to manifest and defend itself through the medium of speculative doctrines : while on the subject of religion, we found all things bespread with the same pallid hue,

all veiled with the same mournful shades of ignorance, formalism, or infidelity.

The first question suggested by the contemplation of these evils, is the momentous one, Can they be removed? To this, our faith in God, in truth, and in humanity unhesitatingly replies, They can! The inalienability of this inheritance of wretchedness and sin is inconsistent with what we know of God's goodness, and at variance with that method of recovery which, through his Son, he has communicated to the world. The causes of human misery lie not in the physical creation; nature herself is beneficent and lovely, and offers no obstruction to the elevation of man; the earth is stored with riches, a thousand appliances sleep within its bosom for promoting the happiness of its possessor; truth is radiant still,—still the Infinite Mind looks out upon us in the grandeur and beauty of his works, and speaks to us in accents of mercy through the Bible and the cross. All things look propitiously on human progress, man alone opposes it; but man, even in sinfulness, is not omnipotent, his selfishness has been grappled with by Almighty love, and must surrender. The causes of human misery are found exclusively in the human heart, and precisely on this account may we calculate, by Divine help, on their removal.

If these evils are removable, it is important to ask, By whom shall they be removed? To what classes of society are we entitled to look for aid? The answer in this case is no more doubtful than in the former—the task of elevating the working man will require the hearty cooperation of all classes. Intelligence and wealth must furnish the means of improvement, piety

must ply him with precept and example, his circumstances must be so far changed that no external obstacles shall oppose his reformation ; but the work, to be completely successful, must be made his own. He is not made of passive materials which can be polished and decorated by foreign skill, but a creature who is endowed with reason and volition, who claims the right of being a law to himself, and whose character and circumstances must always be an exact reflection of what he is within. The concentration upon him of every propitious influence would be of little use if it did not succeed in waking his own energies to life, and warming his own soul with the breath of freedom. Pitying angels might descend to break his fetters, and open the doors of his prison, but their pity would be bootless if it did not prevail upon him to use his limbs, and go forth from the house of bondage.

First, then, among the means which are requisite for elevating the condition of the working man, we place *a recognition on the part of society at large of its own obligation to help him* ; an obligation springing from those principles of justice and benevolence which are inseparably connected with its existence and well-being. But this by itself would accomplish very little ; the sincerest and best directed efforts on the part of others can prove useful only by stimulating his own energies ; he cannot *be raised*, his elevation must be the work of his own will : hence it is necessary, not only that others help him, but that, in concert with them, he vigorously resolve to help himself. But this self-effort implies the possession of stronger motives and the exercise of larger capabilities than the working man at present possesses :

it is a melancholy fact, that in the great majority of instances he has neither the desire nor the ability to help himself. An individual must be dissatisfied with his condition before he will seriously think of improving it, and his attempts at self-improvement will be successful only in proportion as they are appropriate and well-sustained. Hence knowledge is required for the working man, in order that he may become the subject of more refined tastes, and may be fitted intellectually for working out his own rescue. But secular knowledge is not all-sufficient, even within its own province, while it can do little towards conferring upon the soul the highest blessings. Its natural tendency is beneficial, but it sometimes finds companionship in vice, and has been found too often in the spendthrift, the drunkard, and the thief. Religion alone can make other means successful in promoting the physical and moral elevation of the working classes, while its own unaided force can do more for the attainment of that object than all other means united. In the change which it accomplishes within the heart, and the elevation of feeling which it awakens by connecting the soul with heaven, we find the surest pledge of improvement in their entire condition.

I. The first step to be taken in order to elevate the condition of the working man is A GENEROUS DETERMINATION ON THE PART OF SOCIETY AT LARGE TO HELP HIM ; and we wish in the first place to show that this determination is imperatively *a social duty*. The obligations which spring from our social relations are yet but very imperfectly understood ; current views respecting them,

if not erroneous, are incomplete. They are founded solely on one aspect of the question, they assume the absolute correctness of a principle which is fit for being acted upon only when duly limited by others. If we examine the mischievous effects of opinion upon the interests of mankind, it will be found that they spring less from error than from the exaggerations and misapplications of truth. The majority of men are incapable of perceiving those delicate lines which limit the application of a principle, and, accordingly, nothing is more common than the aggrandizement of a favourite opinion at the expense of another which has an equal right to exclusive sovereignty. It might be justly affirmed, that the various metaphysical systems which have successively held the empire of human thought were all true and all false. For the most part their constituent doctrines were true, but they were mixed in wrong proportions, so that each system differed from the rest chiefly in the preponderance of some element which was common to them all. If the passions could have taken so deep an interest in metaphysics as uniformly to have cherished a preference for the same doctrine, all speculation would have been vitiated by one common error, which it would have required the utmost energies of truth to correct. What was impossible in speculation has been realized in practice; here the passions have uniformly been partial to the same principle, the extent of whose application they have enlarged beyond its proper bounds. In the world, self-interest is regarded as the exclusive social law. Other principles are formally recognised, but their jurisdiction is vague and shadowy, they embody

no absolute obligation, they never speak in the imperative mood; whatever heed may be taken of them is looked upon as a work of supererogation; should they ever steal into the haunts of business they are regarded as fair intruders, admitted there on a principle of moral gallantry, rather than their own sovereign right. With scarcely a single dissentient voice self-interest is vested with absolute control in all secular matters, and nobler principles are kept, as if for state occasions, when the mind is graciously disposed to acts of unusual goodness.

Self-interest, confined within proper limits, is a just and beneficent principle. It has been ordained by the Creator one of the chief means of promoting individual happiness, and thus of advancing the general welfare of the species. In this arrangement we see that characteristic of the doings of an Infinite Mind, whereby the fruition and happiness of every portion of his works are consistent with the fruition and happiness of the whole. In order to promote the happiness of mankind God bade every man consult his own, having so ordered the issues of events that obedience to this law would further the welfare of all. A regard to self-interest is only the outward manifestation of self-love, a principle which holds a place among the simplest elements of our moral nature, the influence of which has been displayed in the lives of the holiest men, and without which it is difficult to conceive how the human race could possibly have continued to exist. Self-interest as a social law is divinely constituted, but it is not vested with absolute control—it enjoys only a co-ordinate jurisdiction, its sphere of operation is bounded by other principles, it has no right to the monopoly it

has usurped over the opinions and conduct of mankind. Benevolence is equally imperative. The same careful and systematic regard which we pay to our own welfare, we are bound to pay to the welfare of others. It is lawful to act according to the dictates of self-interest, but the same legislative authority which made it so has also decreed, that the measure of love which we cherish towards ourselves shall be the measure of what we ought to cherish towards our neighbour. We have remembered only half the precept, while the whole retains its force. We have emblazoned in golden letters to the mind's eye that part which relates to ourselves, while the rest we have kept in private, as a memorandum for occasional perusal, or else consigned to entire oblivion.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the rule which mankind received from the lips of the Great Teacher, and it is confirmed and enforced by the general tendencies of society. Self-interest, as a law of life, receives a sanction from experience, but so also does *an enlightened and constant regard to the welfare of others*. As principles of social action, both are equally important and equally binding. Discard the former, and society stands still; discard the latter, and it rushes to ruin. Without the recognition of the one, society could not exist; without the recognition of the other, its existence must be a series of revolutions. Self-interest acted on as an absolute and exclusive principle is self-destructive, it tends to a complete disruption of the social ties, to complete disorganization and decay. The welfare of society is intimately connected with the mutual sentiments with which its

members regard each other. In order to promote it they should be bound together by ties of delicate and manly sympathy ; they should have one pulse, one purpose, one soul. The bosom of every man should open an avenue through which compassion might freely pass, to touch those common chords which diffuse through all vibrations of kindred pity. In such a state of the social body physical wretchedness would be unknown ; the knowledge of its existence would be sufficient to array the resources of society in a crusade against it. Men would feel that the highest ends for which wealth and influence are lent by Heaven remain unanswered while their fellow-man is the victim of evils from which they could effect his rescue. But selfishness is a deadly foe to these generous social virtues ; self-interest, constituted the highest law, creates an intense individuality of feeling, shuts the eye to scenes of suffering, renders the bosom inaccessible to the claims of pity, isolates man from man, and makes society a fortuitous assemblage of atoms, rather than a living whole. Composed of such heterogeneous materials, with so little *cement* in its constitution, society is ill fitted to battle with the waves of popular tumult, and will be in danger on the first collision of breaking into a thousand pieces. While such an exclusive regard to the dictates of self-interest unfits society for resisting successfully the effects of sudden change, it has by virtue of its influence on social progress an inevitable tendency to produce them. It invariably tends to the accumulation of wealth in a few hands ; in concert with the power of capital it draws, at every step, the aggregate riches of the community within a narrower circle,

and renders broader and deeper the chasm which separates the rich from the poor. But wealth and poverty have their peculiar vices, and except when reconciled through the medium of philanthropy, they have little in common but suspicion and frowns. Wealth is apt to indulge in pride and oppression, and poverty in recrimination and despair. Such elements cannot slumber peacefully in the sky, sooner or later they must meet, and vent themselves in storms and thunder. This catastrophe is often delayed by the conservative forces of society, but only to happen at length with more destructive violence, rending asunder the social fabric, and filling the earth with terror, with wailings, and with blood.

On every ground, both human and divine, *benevolence* is entitled to the rank of a social law. It has no exceptional or occasional jurisdiction, but is entitled to a joint authority with self-interest in all the actions and schemes of life. Its exercise is not a piece of supererogation, but an act of positive duty, inculcated by religion, and enforced by a regard to the general interests of mankind. It exerts a softening influence upon the heart, brings into play its noblest sympathies, promotes a fusion of soul with soul, rescues life from the charge of being a gladiatorial struggle for gold, and converts it into a sphere of holy discipline, where love, yet fragile, by daily exercise may grow athletic, latent sensibilities may be evoked and trained, and the intercourse of man with man may be gradually changed into a reciprocation of guileless courtesies and honest friendship. Thus, benevolence holds society together, unites its constituent atoms in the embrace of an all-pervading principle, enabling it to resist alike the

storms of anarchy, and the crumbling touch of time. Its influence on the social relations is equally propitious ; it gives to the revolutions of wealth a centrifugal force, which keeps them sufficiently large to encircle the entire community ; it tends to create such a distribution of temporal blessings as would place every man in circumstances of comfort, and diffuse the life-blood of contentment throughout the social system. In this light, benevolence takes its place among those conservative principles which alone can insure to the interests of mankind a safe and permanent progress ; Providence has given us, in its supremacy, a safeguard against those evils on which commonwealths make shipwreck. No political revolutions, no outlandish laws, no socialist theories are necessary to secure the prosperity and permanence of social interests ; let men delight in doing good to each other,—this is the sovereign specific. God has given us a law for making the world happy, its sanctions are felt in every bosom, and the means of carrying out its provisions are accessible on every hand.

But benevolence is *identical* with *justice* ; it comprises no more than man *owes* to man. Obligation does not arise exclusively from utilitarian considerations ; these indicate its existence, but furnish us with no account of its birth. For the origin of our social duties we must look, not to the future, but to the past ; not to indefinite and uncertain tendencies, but to the will of God, as written on the book of nature, unfolded more clearly in the pages of inspiration, and echoed in the heart. Traced to their primitive spring, the sister streams of benevolence and justice meet ; on issuing from Paradise they are one, only in the dark and

tortuous ways of life have they been divided. Man owes to every human being the affection of a brother. He was not created a savage ; the theory which says so is profane : he was not originally inspired with sentiments of inveterate malignity towards his species ; the libel which affirms it is worthily associated with despotism in politics, profligacy in morals, and infidelity in religion. No ! fraternity was the condition of his creation ; social sentiments and affections were implanted in his bosom, for the exercise of which a genial sphere was opened by the hand of God. Issuing from the same pair, mankind were continually reminded, by a visible relationship, of the feelings with which they ought to regard each other. Had they been created individually, by a direct exercise of Divine power, their common origin, derived from an invisible cause, would have been less evident, and would have furnished fewer incitements to social feeling. Finding themselves placed in a similar physical condition, and endowed with susceptibilities of friendship, fraternal sentiments might at length have been developed, but, isolated from all others in their birth, without any past, or any collateral ties, it is more likely that those susceptibilities would have died for want of exercise, and that the soul would have been given up to all-engrossing selfishness. But God has arranged otherwise. He has written his will, not only in the heart, but in the inevitable conditions of our existence ; by the institution of marriage he has opened the channels of a common fatherhood, and a common fraternity, through which the streams of love may flow to the utmost limits of mankind. By this arrangement, relationships which appeal to sense,

aid in enkindling sympathies which move the soul. The inward and the outward of human life are bound by a sacred league to help each other. Selfishness is kept in check by the reminiscences of childhood, by the presence of a common parent, and the claims of common blood. The warmth engendered in the soul by the parental hearth becomes a focus of heat, whose genial rays may be conducted through the world. Under the guidance of inspiration and science, philanthropy may ascend through the gloom of sixty centuries, and proclaim from the verdant slopes of Eden—"God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

The recognition of benevolence as a social law is one of the chief wants of British society. We have arrived at precisely that stage in our national career when such a recognition is imperatively needed to rescue us from imminent evils. During the last century, society amongst us has undergone a radical change; we have advanced with unprecedented rapidity to the height of commercial greatness; the skill and enterprise of individuals, combined with the application of steam to manufactures and navigation, and the extension of our maritime power, have resulted in a prodigious increase of trade, and entirely changed the character and prospects of the nation. This change has naturally been accompanied by one of corresponding magnitude in its internal condition. We have experienced, in the rapidity of progress, the breaking up of ancient interests, and the disruption of ancient ties. The population has been grouped afresh, in accordance with new laws; trade with its magic wand has transferred it from the country to the town; thou-

sands who would otherwise have gained a livelihood by agriculture, or the sober transactions of domestic commerce, depend for their subsistence on the fitful demands of foreign markets. If the people have not become absolutely poorer, their poverty has been brought into more startling contrast with wealth, and has thus been rendered more impressive. Manufactures have developed more strikingly than could have been done by agriculture, the chief doctrine of political economy, that labour is the source of wealth, and has thus started in many a mind new trains of invidious reflection. Important changes have at the same time taken place in popular sentiment: our ancient nationality of feeling has almost vanished; feudal influences have been swept away; that chivalrous veneration which the masses once felt for ancestral splendour and hereditary rule has been considerably diminished. Principles which, whether good or evil in themselves, had at least the merit of binding the different classes of society together, have been displaced, and none have been adopted in their stead. As a people we are disunited; we are broken into factions, sects, and classes; discontent is fiercely brooding in our bosom, hopeless penury finds relief in nursing envenomed thoughts. We want such a manifestation of love as would smile them into kindness, the prevalence of a universal sentiment of brotherhood in which all could find unity and repose. Instead of that restless craving after wealth which reads so keen a satire on the age, we want a more distinct perception of those virtuous uses which alone can adorn it with a stainless lustre: instead of that unmingled satisfaction with which, as the year closes, we look at the sum-total of

our national profits, we want a more anxious desire to ascertain how far they have been shared by the industrial millions : instead of that disposition to regard the labourer merely in the light of a human machine, into which the maxims of political economy are so apt to betray us, we want a practical recognition of his higher nature, of his essential equality with ourselves, of his claims upon our pity, our gratitude, and our esteem ; we want such a warm and unquestioning philanthropy as shall batter down our frigid conventional sympathies, make the master the friend and counsellor of the man, reach the friendless and outcast in their dreary dwellings, and lay, by the potent spell of love, the frenzied demon which rules within their hearts. The exhibition of such a spirit, not only on the part of those who are conspicuous for wealth, but on the part of all who possess influence over the temporal condition of others, would heal many of the evils which oppress society, quickly impart strength and elasticity to its languid frame, light up its downcast countenance with sunny gleams, and gild its path with the anticipated visions of a brighter day.

Regarding a generous determination to help the working classes as an imperative social duty, we proceed to ask, *What are the principles which should control its exercise, and what are the practical forms which it may most appropriately assume?* In reply to the former of these questions we remark—First, that the object aimed at should be *prevention rather than cure*. In this respect a great defect is chargeable on our benevolent efforts. We provide for the destitute, the sick, the helpless, the guilty ; we have our dispensaries, our

hospitals, our workhouses, our asylums, and our gaols; we stand, as it were, on the brink of the moral cataract, whence wretchedness of every sort precipitates itself upon society, and endeavour, but without success, to turn it aside into the petty channels which we have prepared for it. Instead of thus vainly struggling with overwhelming evils, how much better would it be to explore those dreary regions where they take their rise, and destroy them at their source; instead of providing exclusively for sickness, how much better to furnish the people with the conditions of health; instead of remaining satisfied with maintaining asylums for the improvident, and penal settlements for the guilty, how much better would it be to spread among the people those intellectual and moral influences which, with the Divine blessing, would make them thrifty and provident, virtuous and happy!

Secondly,—Whenever practicable, *individual should be preferred to aggregate agency*. Organizations have, to a great extent, usurped the place of personal effort. For the attainment of some objects they are very necessary, but it is to be feared that they too often stand as a merely theoretical acknowledgment of duty,—a public servant, kept to perform badly what each individual would do best himself. In how many cases, for example, does the subscription of a guinea to a charitable institution furnish conscience with a dispensation from the necessity of being liberal for a whole year! Every new claim which may be presented is tacitly referred to this standing act of benevolence, and instantly silenced. Like ordinary business transactions, charity is thus done by wholesale, with a similar result in point of cheapness. How many

advantages would be gained if private benevolence were to become its own almoner! Not to speak of the pecuniary saving which would result from having a less amount of charitable machinery to keep in operation, what costly blessings would be conferred both on the recipient and the giver! It is one thing to be relieved by the officer of a public institution, who is paid for doing it, and another to receive help direct from the hand of a disinterested friend. In the former case an emotion of joy is experienced, but no sense of personal obligation enters into it, and for moral purposes it is useless; while in the latter the feeling awakened is strong and definite—the expression of personal sympathy has caused the tenderest chords within the soul to vibrate, and fixed itself in pleasurable reminiscences and grateful resolves. Nor would a less advantage accrue to the giver: “Blessed is the man that *considereth* the poor.” Converse with the destitute is healthful; it brings into action a class of sensibilities whose influence is highly necessary for the purpose of discipline, furnishes a salutary check to the growth of indifference and pride, and opens to us a source of the purest pleasure. To be charitable by proxy is to make ourselves strangers to half “the luxury of doing good.”

Thirdly,—Benevolence should *adopt those modes of administering help which are most likely to stimulate the individuals relieved to self-exertion*. Except in extreme cases, many evils spring from eleemosynary aid. It offers a premium to indolence, takes away the chief stimulus to exertion, and alienates the coarser motives of self-interest from the side of labour. When given frequently, it does positive injury to the recipient.

God has arranged that the bodily and mental faculties shall be developed by labour. A man is a stranger to himself till he gains the acquaintance in the crush of actual life. Perpetuate the treatment of infancy, and man would remain a babe; one half his soul would lie asleep, to be roused perhaps to a sense of its intellectual pupilage only by the stroke of death. It is quite possible to be too paternal in the treatment of mankind. Let them stand alone; help them only when they fall, and then only till they have risen again; any further help is impertinent, it is unkind. By alternate success and failure let them prove themselves, and be disciplined for immortality.

These evils affect the individual, but there are others springing from the same source which affect society. As heat is propagated through liquid bodies by a free circulation of particles, so are true principles diffused through the world by the free action and reaction of one mind upon another. Render all human minds but one dependent upon that one, and progress would be impossible; one opinion, one tendency, whether good or bad, would be common to them all. Precisely as the principle of dependence is developed in society, is the mobility of the mass diminished, and social progress impeded. Besides, in proportion as the individual deteriorates, the social energies of mankind are weakened. A community is industrious, provident, and enterprising in exactly the same ratio as corresponding qualities exist among its members. Society is dependent upon no human power besides itself, since it represents the aggregate of mankind. It can accomplish all that is possible to man, but this must be accomplished by its own energies or

not at all. No miracle guards it from extinction ; if it choose to do nothing, and dare nothing, as a matter of course it will die. But the determination and self-reliance which are thus necessary to the very existence of society can only spring from the determination and self-reliance of those who compose it. Thus every indolent, irresolute, and improvident man is an element of social decay and dissolution.

With these principles in view, benevolence may be left to choose its own manifestations, assured that it can only choose such as are beneficial to society ; there are, however, several specific forms in which its action is eminently required, to which we will briefly direct attention.

It is required in order *to establish the habit of friendly intercourse between the employer and the employed*. They are at present separated too much for the interests of society and themselves. Very often the employer is known only as the owner of capital ; the only aspect under which he is presented to his work-people is a mercenary one. He seldom speaks to them ; they cannot approach him confident of obtaining at least a patient and respectful hearing ; the entire management of their mutual relations is consigned to foremen and overlookers, who act as they please without any danger of appeal to higher powers. Should such an appeal be made, the reply in too many cases would be, " I leave all matters of that sort to my manager,— I cannot interfere with his arrangements." Such delegated authority is at least *liable* to abuse, and since it is exercised in the name and in the behalf of the master, it is his interest to see that it is fairly exercised. Still more usual is it for employers to give themselves

no concern about the domestic condition, or the character, whether moral or religious, of their work-people. Arbitrary or bigoted interference with such matters cannot be too strongly deprecated, but absolute apathy is equally criminal. The individual who has a thousand persons in his employ, holds an enviable and responsible position. What a noble sphere of usefulness! Talk of churches, municipal corporations, kingdoms,—the heads of these organizations have less real power than he. To raise the temporal and spiritual condition of a thousand persons is an object worth living for, and should far transcend, in a Christian's estimation, the amplest fortune which their toil might raise. Why has Providence permitted so many to be brought under the influence of one man? That they may make him richer?—No; chiefly that he may possess the means of guiding, educating, and raising them—that the weak may have a champion in the strong—that the intelligence and refinement of the wealthier classes, by being connected with the means of subsistence, may exert a more powerful influence on their humbler brethren. Providentially considered, the acquisition of wealth is a subsidiary end; and yet, as society will soon discover, an end which will be more successfully gained by a faithful discharge of those moral duties which are bound up with it.

It is required *to supplement and soften the scientific laws which regulate the remuneration of labour.* The mutual relations of demand and supply determine the price at which labour *can be* procured, but those relations do not affect the morals of the question. Owing to special circumstances it is frequently the case, that the market price of labour would starve the workman,

while the master is well able, from the profits of his business, to double it. For example, we know two large mills, each employing perhaps a thousand workpeople, one situated in the heart of a manufacturing town, and the other, which was established with the benevolent view of affording employment to a very destitute district, in the neighbourhood of a small agricultural borough. In the latter of these manufactories the rate of wages is twenty-five per cent. lower than in the former, and its owner recently expressed his conviction that if he were to reduce the wages of his workpeople to two-thirds their present amount, they would be compelled to accept the reduction. And yet both firms buy and sell in the same market ; and both are highly flourishing and lucrative. In this and similar cases, it is evident that the market price of labour, though it fixes the amount of wages which the workman can demand, does not measure either the ability or the duty of the employer to remunerate on a more liberal scale. This is a province in the domain of conscience ; here benevolence and justice are called to act ; here Christian principle has scope for proving its superiority to the selfishness which too often guides the transactions of trade. The question of wages, as presented to a Christian employer, should be, not, At what rate can *I force* my workmen to serve me ; but, At what rate can *I afford* to pay them, reserving safe and suitable profits to myself. This at least is the light in which the Scriptures place it,—“ Masters, give unto your servants that which is *just* and *equal* ; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”¹ If scientific

(1) Colos. iv. 1.

laws were intended to control the conscience of the Christian, there would be no room for such a precept. A generous solution of this question might offer some check to the rapid amassing of large fortunes, but it would tend to abate the severity of competition, to give greater security to capital, and spread the possession of competence among a much greater number of the people. To accomplish this object no sacrifice is demanded, no derangement of the social system, no surrender of the rights of property, but only such an observance of what is fair, generous, just, as a man, under the influence of correct principle, would deem it his interest to yield.

The influence of the same principle is required to *ameliorate the conditions, and shorten the hours of toil*. In both these respects the tide of improvement has set in. The health of the workpeople is now kept prominently in view in the larger class of factories, especially in those which have been most recently built. Nor is this a thing of trivial moment. It is proved by indubitable evidence, that by badly ventilated work-rooms the health of the workpeople is most seriously affected,—their ordinary rate of mortality being in some establishments doubled, from this cause alone. Simple justice requires that the places where the workman is obliged to spend one-half of his existence should be made as conducive to his health as the nature of his employment will admit: it is his *labour* not his *life* which wages profess to purchase. In nothing more than this is short-sighted economy more certain to defeat its own ends. Sickly workmen never work well; whatever injuriously affects their comforts diminishes in

the end the profits of the employer. A change for the better is also perceptible in the disposition which is gaining ground to curtail the hours of labour. On this subject the legislature has pronounced its decision in passing the 'Ten-Hours' Bill. Without advancing an opinion respecting the principle of that measure, we may be permitted to rejoice in its results. The time which has been rescued from labour is not given up to dissipation; by thousands of our factory youth, who are burning with the desire for self-improvement, it has been welcomed as a precious boon, and is conscientiously devoted to intellectual pursuits. The factory-girl has leisure to knit and sew, and initiate herself in the various domestic duties; the father can spend a free hour by his fireside, without encroaching upon his night's repose; can unbend his mind, gather his children round him, and snatch a few of the positive joys of existence. All this can be accomplished without any injury to the pecuniary interests of either the employer or the employed; in most cases the same quantity of work is done and the same amount of wages earned as on the old system. Something equivalent in effect to a 'Ten-Hours' Bill is needed beyond the precincts of the factory; the young men of England have yet to be set free from the bondage of excessive toil. Society is earnestly implored to give to the most intelligent and most promising of its rising members the means of fitting themselves for the responsibilities they will shortly have to assume. To confer this boon no vast revolution is necessary; it is almost reducible to a little family arrangement,—let everybody purchase by day and not by night, and the work is done.

To the same quarter we have to look for *the providing of better dwellings for the labouring classes*. This is a primary want, it stands at the outset of all improvement. Let an individual who is accustomed to the domestic arrangements of middle life imagine himself and family obliged to live year after year in a single room, and endeavour to picture the numerous privations to which he would be subjected. If in addition he imagines that room to be a cellar, with scarcely an aperture through which light and air can be conveyed, and surrounded by a district so damp and badly drained that fetid moisture is constantly oozing through its rotten walls, he will have some idea of the circumstances in which thousands of the poor are placed. An appeal like this is often barred by the response,—“ But they are accustomed to it, they do not feel the wretchedness of their condition, never having experienced a better.” This is too true, but instead of softening our view of their condition, it only renders it, to the eye of enlightened humanity, incomparably worse, since it shows that they have sunk to the level of their outward circumstances, that the soul is as dark and uncouth as its brutal abode. To raise the social condition of the working man, his home must be made more healthful; he must be rescued from those miserable courts and alleys, those damp and filthy cellars where he now prolongs a living death, and must be placed where he may at least be reached by the light and air of heaven. The dunghill must be moved from his door, the cesspool with its fever stench must no longer pollute his dwelling, those limpid streams which are straggling down the bosom of the neighbouring hills on their

way to the ocean, must be diverted from their course to minister to his cleanliness ; for him nature must own her primitive subjection, and discharge her friendly offices : he too must feel that the world was made for man, and that it is not meet for him who was created to enjoy its sovereignty, to wallow in more than brutal wretchedness. This at least can be done for him—here even mammon may approve ; let but the experiment be made, let suitable buildings be erected, with a measure of convenience amounting to comparative luxury, and provided ordinary intelligence be exercised in carrying it out, it will yield, certainly not nine or eleven per cent., but good remunerative profits on the outlay. Thanks to lord Ashley and his coadjutors, the experiment has been made, and with complete success. Through their benevolent exertions hundreds of families have been placed in clean and healthy dwellings. “The Metropolitan Society for improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes,” under the patronage of Her most Gracious Majesty, and the presidency of her illustrious Consort, is actively engaged in carrying out this noble work ; calling, by the force of a good example, to every lover of his country, to “go and do likewise.”

We will mention only one other department in which society can directly contribute to the physical well-being of the working classes, *the establishment of suitable places for exercise and recreation, and other means of promoting health* ; we refer more especially to public baths, wash-houses and parks. A positive necessity exists for such institutions. We are apt to regard them too much as luxuries, and not enough as absolutely requisite for developing and sustaining the

various functions of life. The spread of physiological knowledge will help to correct these erroneous impressions ; we shall soon perceive that such things are among our chief wants, and that to dispense with them is opposed to the first dictates of prudence. The bulk of our manufacturing population is situated in the heart of large towns, surrounded by huge factories and labyrinths of streets, while even the sky is concealed from them by a canopy of smoke which the sun's rays can scarcely pierce. The land in the immediate neighbourhood is generally the property of the wealthier citizens ; their villas stand on every advantageous site, each surrounded by its ample range of shrubbery and garden. The prospect is exhilarating ;—fair evidence of wealth and taste ! but here is no spot which the working man may call his own, he treads everywhere on sufferance, he seems excluded from the heritage of nature. Apart from considerations of mere utility, how unpropitious must such circumstances be to the moral feelings of the working classes ! How crushingly must the thought fall on them, that they are merely born to toil ! What pensiveness must they feel at being thus shut out from the amenities of creation ! For them the rose-bush blossoms not ; the solemn oak—they never reposed beneath its shade ; the breath of morning, perfumed with the odours which have been caught up from beds of flowers—it never regaled their senses : and yet they have sympathy with nature in its floral beauties ; witness that sickly geranium, tended like a child from day to day ; see a whole family clustered round it, anxious to verify the announcement that the favourite has blossomed. Here are tastes which only need to be

developed, sympathies which only require culture to be made the source of grateful and ennobling pleasures. In this respect also we are on the eve of improvement; the first steps have already been taken, they only require to be imitated and followed up. Several of the larger manufacturing towns can now boast of their public parks: Manchester possesses three, to one of which a library, reading-room, and museum are attached, all free. These parks have been confided to the people's care, and faithfully has the trust been kept. Though frequented by thousands daily, it is rarely that a flower is plucked or a plant injured. The gymnasia are the resort of the agile of all ages: the child, the youth, the man, are there, engaged in appropriate pastimes, exercising to healthy action the muscles which have been cramped by labour, and preparing themselves for working vigorously and cheerfully on the coming day.

II. We have thus endeavoured to show that it is the duty and interest of society to help the working man, and indicated some of the methods in which that help may most advantageously be given; we have now to speak upon a still more important topic,—WHAT CAN THE WORKING MAN DO FOR HIMSELF?

In entering upon this branch of the subject we would again assure him of the more than friendly spirit which dictates every word we write, did we not hope that he is by this time so well convinced of it as to render such an assurance unnecessary. A higher motive than this prevents us from endeavouring to win his assent by mere professions; unaffected respect for the working man disposes us rather to ask nothing from him but the

exercise of candour. Let him calmly, and without prejudice, weigh every sentiment which may be advanced; in a word, let him think for himself, and then should he even happen to differ from us, the result will gratify, if it will not be equal to our wishes.

There are two lines in a modern poet, which faction has often quoted, but which we venture to quote in the name of the highest freedom. The working man is familiar with them in another application :—

“ Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not,
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow!”

This sentiment, worthy to be the watchword of the patriot when reanimating the fires of liberty in the bosoms of an enslaved and degenerate people, is much more worthy of the man who adopts it as the utterance of a spirit bent on freeing itself from the fetters of ignorance and vice. *The working man must help himself*, for unless he does so he cannot be helped at all. Wealth may lavish its thousands, truth in order to win him may assume the purest garb and adopt the most persuasive accents, but if he *will not* rise, all the world cannot raise him. Under God—ennobling yet perilous fact!—he is his own keeper, his own master, his own guide. But can he help himself? In some directions, we acknowledge, he would have to encounter many difficulties—difficulties in the removal of which he is entitled to expect, and will assuredly receive, the help of others; but after making every allowance, the broad truth is still indisputable that he will be his own greatest friend or greatest foe, and that he could do more by his own efforts towards elevating his condition, than could all the combined resources of society without them. We will

endeavour to show, as briefly as possible, how the working man both can and ought to help himself.

In order to make any successful attempt at self-improvement, the working man must first disabuse himself of several fallacious impressions, which injure his position relatively to other sections of the social body. One of the most mischievous of these is *his belief in the efficacy of physical force*. It has been the fashion with political agitators of a certain class, whenever a supposed grievance has been mooted, to hint darkly but unmistakably at the power which resides in the multitude, and the probable success of an armed collision with the public authorities. They have made him familiar with the idea of "carrying the 'Charter' at the cannon's mouth"—of establishing a "people's parliament" in opposition to the duly elected representatives of the nation. So strongly have the feelings of a large section of the working classes been enlisted in favour of such measures, that an indisposition to enter upon them amounted at one time to a complete forfeiture of their confidence. This has resulted in the alienation of their truest friends, and in the monopoly of their applause by men who entered upon agitation as a gainful trade, and who, after conducting infatuated crowds within the meshes of the law, generally contrived to escape scathless. Try the theory of physical force by what it has done for the people:—it has not gained them a single triumph, it has in every instance failed. To say it has done nothing, would unhappily be untrue; it has divided their energies, it has divorced brute power from intelligence and principle, it has increased the alienation which previously existed between

the middle and working classes, it has strengthened the fears of the wealthy respecting democratic ascendency, and has thus put off from time to time any extension of the political franchise. It is happily a mistake to imagine that physical force can gain any concessions. The constitution of this country is not to be coerced: many who are the foremost in acknowledging its defects, regard it with high veneration. It has been the palladium of British freedom in the darkest times; it is the prize for which patriots contended in those early struggles which still inspire the hearts of their posterity with grateful heroism. Beneath its shade property has rested secure, the rights of the people have been successfully maintained, and the cottage hearth declared as inviolable as the precincts of the throne. Talk of its demolition, and the very instincts of the nation array themselves in its defence. It is too much to claim for it entire exemption from defect, or to say that, unlike every other creation of human skill, it is incapable of being beautified or repaired; but let these changes be effected peacefully. If all political ties were broken, if society were thrown into a rudimentary state, and the wisest and best of our countrymen were invested with plenary power to form everything anew, it is unlikely that they would hit upon precisely the present arrangement. But this is impossible; the present is always made for us; it is the legacy of the past; for its faults and its excellences the present generation is not responsible; and as a social polity of any sort is better than none at all, it is our duty to accept it in a liberal and thankful spirit, and endeavour by gradual changes to make it a more valuable possession

for our children. But progress, in its very nature, is pacific; the rankest conservatism invariably follows in the wake of physical force; the man who draws a sword forges a chain; every act of violence, every incendiary speech, rolls back a stage or two the car of freedom. Moral force was never so influential as it is now; public opinion determines the decisions of the legislature and the course of government; whenever a truth intrenches itself in the intelligence of the nation, from that moment its triumph is certain. Publicity is the test of justice, and this is within the reach of all. The press is open for the discussion of public grievances, or the utterance of private wrongs. The insertion of a paragraph in a newspaper calls forth in a few hours the irresistible verdict of a whole nation. Probably any one of those letters on the state of the labouring classes, which have recently appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, has done more towards improving it than all the "strikes" which Trades' Unions ever maintained. Reason is the only weapon which should be used in the battles of civilized men; take the sword of civil warfare, and hang it up among the racks and thumb-screws of a barbarous age!

Another fallacious impression of which the working man must be disabused, is *that which leads him to regard himself as the object of relentless hatred to the wealthier classes*. That such an impression exists, but little penetration is requisite to discover; it is often so strong that a merely respectable appearance is construed into a badge of enmity. The simple fact that an individual gains his livelihood by conducting a business on his own account, is thought to render it impossible for him to sympathize with those who subsist on weekly

wages ; while the aristocracy, as beheld through the medium of their jaundiced fancy, are a set of tyrannical and selfish men, engaged in a conspiracy against popular rights, and more anxious to retain a shred of honour, than to promote the welfare of the masses. Such impressions are excessively mischievous ; they furnish the imagination of the industrial classes with dark ideas, administer a malignant stimulus to the passions, and silently create a power which may burst out at any moment into destructive action. They alienate class from class, give a hue of treacherousness to the most sincere intentions, and render them futile by withholding the co-operation of the very individuals whose condition they aim at ameliorating. But are such impressions correct ? Setting recrimination aside, and endeavouring to reach the bare truth, what are the feelings with which the wealthier classes regard their poorer brethren ? We speak not of opinions, we pronounce no judgment upon the various schemes by which opposite parties are carrying out professedly philanthropic designs, we allude simply to those qualities which rule our estimate of individual character, and these, we affirm, are not of that malignant and selfish hue under which they are often represented. It is true that no section of the social body can boast of an exclusive patent for goodness ; unjust and unamiable men are too common in every grade of life, and, as peculiar circumstances often give a specific direction to what is sinful within us, the common material of depravity which has shown itself among the poor in sentiments almost bordering upon hatred towards their superiors in wealth and station, may possibly have appeared among the latter

in the guise of haughtiness and over-exaction. But exceptions do not nullify the rule, they rather confirm it. Working men are not all drunkards, because a few are occasionally intoxicated; neither are the wealthier classes unjust and rapacious because some of their number have entitled themselves to such a description. To what classes do those individuals belong who are the foremost in advancing the welfare of the people? Some have sprung direct from the ranks of labour, but the majority belong to those of nobility and wealth.¹ It is needless to mention lord Ashley, a nobleman whom it would be an insult to eulogize, but whose philanthropic exertions, so earnestly and consistently pursued, have won for him the proud distinction of a benefactor to his species. Let us listen to another eminent individual who recently declared from his place in the House of Lords, that "sooner than consent to any measure which should either in seeming or in reality diminish the comforts or necessities of life of the great masses of the people, he would forfeit the place he had the honour to hold among their lordships' ranks."² Nor are these exceptional instances, they fairly express the feelings which already exist to a very wide extent among the wealthier classes of society, and which are rapidly spreading. The most eminent philanthropists of the day are the men who are most popular, not solely or even chiefly among the working classes, but among those

(1) It is a pleasing circumstance that at the splendid banquet recently given at the Mansion House, London, in reference to the Industrial Exhibition of 1851, at which were present His Royal Highness Prince Albert, the magistrates of 202 English cities and boroughs, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the foreign ministers, and leading statesmen of all classes, one of the sentiments proposed was—"The working men of the United Kingdom."

(2) Earl of Carlisle.

who, for factious purposes, have been represented as conspirators against the interests of the poor. Society calls upon the working man to expel suspicion from his bosom; whether he choose to believe it or not, he is the object of a generous friendship which ardently longs for his improvement. Instead of putting an unkind construction upon what may be attempted in his behalf, let him hail it with cordial feeling, and aid with his whole heart in its promotion. Only let him combine with the watchfulness which he is bound to exercise over his own interests, a little of that charity which thinketh no evil, that generous feeling which lives with kindness and self-reliance, and he will soon find that rank, and criminal indifference to the wants of the poor, wealth, and hostility to the claims of labour, do not necessarily co-exist, and that where he expected to encounter the cold looks of calculating selfishness, there awaits him the cordial embrace of a brother.

Having disabused his mind of these and similar impressions, the working man will be fitted for entering upon the path of practical improvement. In this, his first step is to *raise himself*. Having once accomplished his own elevation, the rest of the ascent will be natural and easy. Generally speaking, the internal and external conditions of an individual exactly agree. The poet's grotto and the lion's lair correspond respectively to the nature of their possessors. If beauty is to reign without, it must first be enthroned within. Man is himself the instrument by which alone the blessings of life can be acquired. Success is not the gift of chance; it is won by the persevering use of suitable

means. If we were to examine the career of those men who seem by the suddenness and extent of their prosperity to have been especially fortunate, we should probably find that they have received no more than the exact value of the intelligence and labour they expended. Just as soon might the artisan hope to execute a first-rate piece of workmanship with bad tools, as to raise himself in the world by means of ignorance and apathy. The results of human life are proportioned to the skill with which it is managed, and the quantity of vital force which is infused into it. Hence, an individual whose mind is uninformed, and whose will is destitute of energy, however he may complain of his lot, assuredly has no right to expect a better.

Intellectual and moral culture lies at the foundation of self-improvement. How, then, may this culture be attained? Mental discipline and the acquisition of knowledge require books and teachers. How can the possession of these means be made accessible to the slender resources of the working man? We confess that in this dilemma he may not unreasonably expect some aid. Here, however, we wish to direct attention to the fact, that, with few exceptions, he is *able* to provide the means of instruction for himself. The intelligence of an individual must be measured, not by the number of books which he has in his possession, but by the number which he has carefully perused. Hence, the object to be gained, is not that he should be the absolute possessor of fifty volumes, but that he should have the opportunity of perusing them. Now, though fifty working men might be quite unequal to the purchase of fifty volumes apiece, they are

each able to purchase one ; thus, by a little friendly co-operation, each might have the opportunity of reading the entire fifty at the trifling cost of one-fiftieth of the entire outlay. It is equally within the power of the working man to procure the services of a skilled instructor. A single individual might be quite unable to pay, for example, twelve pounds per quarter for this purpose ; such a sum would perhaps be equal to the whole amount of his earnings during that period ; but he could easily spare five shillings, which, from fifty persons, whose studies could be efficiently conducted by the same teacher, would make up the required sum. A combination of these plans is that which is adopted in Mechanics' Institutes, People's Colleges, and similar associations, and there is scarcely a branch of learning which may not by its means be made accessible to the working man. Mathematics, mechanics, chemistry, logic, intellectual philosophy, ancient and modern languages, are all opened to him ; nor is there any reason why, with a tolerable share of application and perseverance, he may not realize, at a trifling cost, many of the substantial results of regular academical training.

But an instructor, though highly useful, is not indispensably necessary ; much greater progress may be made with such assistance, but success is not unattainable without it. A tolerable degree of capacity and effort is required to derive much good from the most accomplished teacher, and with this prerequisite the working man may accomplish much by his own exertions. We have already had occasion to refer to some of the incidental evils of self-tuition ; many of these evils may be avoided by due attention to the order

and method of study. A moment's reflection on our mental operations is enough to show us the difference between the mind and its acquisitions. A knowledge of what has transpired and is still transpiring in the world without, and of the various properties and laws of matter, is of great practical importance ; it is secondary, however, to the development and discipline of the mind itself. In reference to everything besides itself, the mind is to be looked upon as the agent or instrument ; it is evident, therefore, that its culture should take precedence of every other pursuit. Hence, an individual bent upon self-improvement, would do wrong to plunge at once into the lighter departments of literature, or even into the researches of physical science. He should begin with Euclid rather than with Spenser, and should postpone the gratification which he might draw from the "pictured page" of Hume, and Gibbon, and Macaulay, till he has fortified his mind by familiarity with the writings of such men as Whately, Whewell and Mill. An acquaintance with intellectual philosophy should form the threshold of self-tuition ; and to a deficiency in this respect may we ascribe many of the narrow views, and much of the fallacious reasoning which pass current with the partially educated. Having conformed to these conditions, there will be less danger of going wrong in the subsequent details of study. Instead of being satisfied with inferior books, the operative student will avail himself of the very best which the several departments of literature afford. Instead of reading indiscriminately whatever comes in his way, he will make a careful selection from the list of authors. A higher object than mere amusement

will regulate his studies. He will not be niggard of patient investigation and hard thought. A few difficulties will not daunt him. The vapid tale and sensual romance will be loathed as they deserve to be, and nothing will be tolerated within the precincts of the mind, save that which will furnish refined and substantial pleasure, or subserve the attainment of useful ends.

But intellectual culture can only be regarded as an element of self-improvement as it is allied with *moral principle*. The former is immeasurably inferior in value to the latter; its chief and noblest end is to make its possessor intelligently acquainted with religious truth. On no subject are the majority of men more careless than on religion, and in nothing does it behove them to be more earnest. They neglect it as a matter of no importance; they regard it as a suppliant for the honour of their patronage, not as a messenger from heaven laden with blessings which it would be folly to refuse, and invested with claims which they cannot without criminality resist. But so far from being at liberty to decline all anxiety on this subject, they are bound by the first obligations to examine it. Man cannot change the condition under which he is born; he cannot divest himself of his immortal and responsible nature; he cannot nullify the weighty responsibilities which press upon him; he cannot annihilate futurity nor quench his own being. He is bound to ask—What am I? Whither am I destined? What is my present condition, and how does it bear upon the prospect of my future well-being? Does anything lie within my power by which my eternal interests might be rendered more secure? These questions are simple, natural, and manly;

the disposition to sift them thoroughly has no necessary connexion with fanaticism. He may refuse to ask them ; but he may also refuse, if in business, to examine his books, or to escape from the fire which encompasses his dwelling, and we know with what result. How admirable to be free from care ! How manly to retain composure in circumstances which would inspire others with profound alarm ! True ; but what shall we say of inevitable bankruptcy, or of being buried beneath a burning pile ? The prudential character of any action is affected by its remotest consequences ; men may deride religion in time,—but what shall we say of eternity ?

Religion is the great lever of self-elevation. Christianity is the only agency which can create the highest forms of personal excellence. This is far from being universally acknowledged. Thousands who join in the chorus which the whole age sings to religion as the herald of civilization, refuse to own her when she appears in the precincts of private life. Such conduct is shallow and inconsistent. Religion is the benefactress of the world, because she is the benefactress of man ; and the beneficial influence she exerts upon the world's progress is only a faint reflection of the good she confers in ministering to the wants of our fallen nature. The present age is utilitarian in the extreme, and on a principle of adaptation, the defender of Christianity has directed a large measure of attention to its temporal advantages. Such a course was wise, but it is possible to push it to pernicious lengths. When, under the care of science, the film is removed from the sight of one who has hitherto been blind, it may be well that

his first view of the optical beauties of creation should be gathered from the starry heavens, where the light of the sun is faintly reflected from the surface of the attendant planets ; but as soon as his sight is strong enough to bear it, who would hesitate to unveil to its gaze the midday splendour of the sun himself ? Yes, it is well to attend the footsteps of the religion of Christ as it scatters among its true adherents the fruits of temporal well-being ; but these, however valuable, are among her inferior gifts ; they are only the twilight of her reflected rays. The effulgence of her full-orbed splendour is seen within the human soul, into which she has darted, straight from heaven, the light of mercy ; from whose bosom she has driven the clouds of ignorance and guilt ; whose cold and torpid faculties she has quickened with celestial love ; and where, beneath her genial influence, the lovely fruits of peace and righteousness abound.

In the Book of books an individual is introduced to us who, under the power of strong emotion, utters the inquiry,—“ What must I do to be saved ? ” Nay, start not, reader ! Let none of your fostered prejudices induce you to fling away this question unexamined. You may never have heard it, save from individuals whom you pitied as hypocrites or fanatics ; you may have regarded it as the chosen formula of “ cant,” or the meaningless common-place of a hireling preacher. Recall for a moment the hasty verdict, and calmly reconsider your judgment before you finally decide. Are you so faultless or so happy that “ salvation ” cannot possibly have any sense appropriate to you ? Is there no danger from which you could be delivered, no innate evil from which you could be freed ? You

can scarcely affirm this; your heart has some misgivings; allow them for a moment full utterance, and lend the ear of wisdom to what they say. You have cherished sympathy with sin, you have given the reins to sensuality, avarice or ambition; while keeping the letter of honesty you have broken its spirit; behind the mask of virtue you have rioted in impure fancies, and have sometimes detected yourself in wishing that the laws of decorum were less stringent, that you might be profligate without becoming odious. At least there has been wanting that child-like love towards the Supreme Being which even reason teaches us is his due, and the absence of which can be regarded only as a heinous sin. Your soul averts its glance from every quarter where it expects to meet with God. Grant any one of these pregnant facts, and what is your position? You are spiritually alienated from God, and if so, imagination would fail to depict the dangers which surround you. But absolute mercy dwells with God;—yes, and absolute justice too. In him both are equally supreme and absolute, and during the night of reason every spark of hope which the one enkindles in the sinful bosom, is at once extinguished by the other. Close the Bible, and the cry of humanity in all ages is answered only by its once plaintive echoes,—“How shall man be just with God?”—“How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?”

The gospel is valuable because it gives an answer to these inquiries. The burden of its announcement is—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹ Christ is the

(1) John iii. 16.

Giver of salvation. The blessings he bestows are precisely those which we most need. On the one hand, he places us in a state of reconciliation with God, procuring for us entire justification and acquittal; on the other, he bestows upon us the influences of his Spirit, quickening us from spiritual death, nurturing within us holy affections and desires, and gradually transforming us into his own perfect image. In order that Christ might bestow upon us these blessings, it was requisite that he should assume our nature, stand in our place, and suffer on our behalf. To this he willingly submitted. "He was found in fashion as a man,"¹—"He gave Himself a ransom for all,"²—"He died for our sins,"³—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."⁴ Raised from the dead on the third day, he ascended to the right hand of power, and there as our great High Priest "he ever liveth to make intercession for us."⁵ Through his blood all who believe in him have now "boldness to enter into the holiest,"⁶ and may hope to receive, on passing from the present state, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."⁷ The inestimable value of these blessings is enhanced by the freeness with which they are bestowed. They are given to us as sinners; they are entirely irrespective of our merits; whoever is sincerely anxious and seeks with true faith to possess them, may do so "without money and without price."⁸ "God is love,"⁹ this truth irradiates creation, it sparkles in every

(1) Philip. ii. 8.

(4) Isaiah liii. 5.

(7) 1 Pet. i. 4.

(2) 1 Tim. ii. 6.

(5) Heb. vii. 25

(8) Isaiah lv. 1.

(3) 1 Cor. xv. 3.

(6) Heb. x. 19.

(9) 1 John iv. 8.

dew-drop, and blossoms in every flower ; but its richest lustre descends upon us through the cross ; God is most godlike in forgiving the transgressor. If, reader, you have ever deigned to weigh the one great question of a sinful soul, listen to the reply which the gospel gives to it, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."¹

Many intelligent working men affect to despise the doctrinal parts of Christianity as useless, while they speak highly, as indeed they are obliged to do, of its moral precepts. Hence it is not uncommon to find them embracing Socialism, or pushing on some scheme of temperance or education, to the utter disparagement and neglect of religion, alleging that it is more practical ; and while ridiculing the Bible, affirming that they are nevertheless the advocates of "practical Christianity." Where, we ask, in the name of common sense, is the reason of such conduct ? Can morality ever be separated from principle ? Is not what we believe the spring of everything we do ? It is something to remind a man that he must be honest, but it is surely far better to make him so ; and if any system professes to be able to do this, it is certainly no disparagement to that system, but, on the contrary, a great recommendation. Christianity makes this profession ; it gives us the precept, and at the same time, through the medium of its doctrines, operates such a change in our principles and habitual feelings that obedience becomes both easy and natural. It is the doctrines of Christianity which render it so superior to all other systems, because it is by virtue of these that it possesses such a

(1) Acts xvi. 31.

hold upon the heart. Surely man does not go wrong because he does not know how to go right. The fault lies in a defect of will, and not of knowledge; the object, therefore, is not so much to tell him what he ought to do, as to make him do it. Education alone cannot give him this willingness; our every-day experience tells us this; an intelligent man may feel no scruple at telling a lie, overreaching his neighbour, getting drunk, or at positive dishonesty. We find selfishness breaking through the strongest net-work of rules and precepts: what does this teach us, but that selfishness itself requires to be rooted out of the soul? Christianity professes to do this; to make a man virtuous, upright, just, disinterested at all times and of his own accord; and if Christianity cannot accomplish this, assuredly no other system can.

When the working man has raised himself by intellectual and moral culture, *the improvement of his outward condition will be an easy task.* A well-furnished abode and a well-regulated family are the sure fruits of intelligence and religion. As this subject, however, is one of no slight importance, we shall be permitted to indulge, in reference to it, in a few practical and homely remarks. The temporal condition of the working man depends upon the way in which he discharges a numerous set of duties, each of which is trivial in itself, but which involve in the aggregate a powerful agency for the promotion of domestic comfort. It is unnecessary to enter into details, not because they are unimportant, but because they are fully treated of in a class of periodicals which the poorest can easily purchase. We shall only advert to two points, namely, *economy* and *cleanliness*. With

respect to the former, it is a sad fact that many working men earn good wages, and yet live in a state of beggarly wretchedness; they have no money, no clothes, no furniture, no home worthy of the name; they are always poor, always complaining, always miserable, and yet their income is quite as large as that upon which thousands in the ranks immediately above them are obliged to maintain a respectable appearance. We could point to numerous cases in confirmation of this statement. We know families consisting of seven individuals, of whom the father and elder children are engaged in some sort of employment, whose joint earnings are equal to a salary of 120*l.* per annum; their weekly rental does not exceed four shillings, other similar items of expenditure are low, and yet their homes are not fit for a human being to enter, nor can they stir abroad on the sabbath for the want of decent apparel. It would not be difficult to point out the way in which their money disappears; if an individual were allowed to witness their daily preparations for dinner, he would cease to feel surprise at their poverty. There is no thrift, no contrivance, no forecast; each meal is provided for as it comes, the table is replenished with such eatables as cost least trouble, without any reference to their extra expensiveness; in a word, there is *no economy*. Such families are artificially poor; they spend all their autumnal store without laying by a grain for winter, and are wretched in the midst of all the elements of comfort. Their condition has re-acted fearfully upon themselves, and rendered their elevation almost hopeless; fed by an unnaturally stimulated appetite, the body has over-

grown the soul. The same individuals who dispense with economy generally set at nought the conditions of health. Extravagance often indicates a want of mental energy which shows itself in all the arrangements and duties of life. Whatever debases the character, weakens it, and lowers the standard of personal convenience. As the influence of sensuality increases, a less amount of decency is sufficient to satisfy the sense of self-respect, till at length *a degree of coarseness and squalor truly brutish is manifested*. Surely some attention is due to health; if not refinement, at least death may speak. The atmosphere of many a dwelling is so contaminated, so laden with noxious smells, that it would seem almost impossible to breathe it even for a few minutes, and yet it is inhaled month after month by a whole family without any sense of inconvenience. In many cases, this does not arise from any deficiency in the means of ventilation, but from the constant accumulation of filth in the corners and crevices of the dwelling. Such sights are piteous; they seem to set the seal of hopelessness upon the condition of the working man; his health, his enjoyments, his character, all that imparts dignity to a human being, daily wasting away from causes which he is competent to destroy. But they *must* be destroyed, he *must* release himself from such fetters, and he *will*. Intelligence and piety will shed a fructifying radiance upon the humblest virtues; under their influence economy and cleanliness, the twofold condition of happiness and health, will become his household law, while the interior of his dwelling will present to the delighted eye of philanthropy the abode, not of a cluster of

instincts regulating the motions of a human form, but of an enlightened, industrious, frugal, healthful, and happy man.

The highest or lowest phase in the external condition of an individual is found *in the state of the family relations*. This constitutes his highest earthly charge. As a parent, he occupies a moral position alike honourable and arduous. In no other capacity is he clothed with such absolute control over the persons of others, or entrusted with the keeping of such momentous interests, or put in possession of such a well-spring of pure felicity. The authority with which he is invested as a parent is conferred upon him direct from heaven, and for its proper employment he cannot possibly be made fully amenable to any earthly tribunal. Society steps in to correct the flagrant violation of some of its duties, but its higher and more spiritual obligations no human jurisdiction is competent to enforce ; these are left to the dictates of an enlightened conscience, with no other check than that which arises from the foreseen consequences of neglect, and the final account which all must render at the bar of God. In the parental relation man is confronted with the future ; it connects him directly with generations yet unborn : in the first degree of descent the influence of his personal character will probably be quadrupled ; from thence its circles will be extended on every side till they embrace the moral condition of thousands. Within certain limits the parent may be styled the moral creator of the coming age. How vast the responsibility which lies upon him ! How solemnly the future interests of the world adjure

him to use his influence well ! But parental duties connect him not only with a temporal, but with an eternal future. His children will live for ever, and will probably carry with them the effects of his example throughout the entire range of their duration. He is training souls,—let him never forget it. He is wakening the susceptibilities and developing the powers of immortal beings. Waiving this high estimate of his position, still it is of unspeakable importance in its bearing upon domestic happiness. A happy home can hardly fail to make a happy man ; let all be genial there, and how much better will he be fitted for facing the frowns or sustaining the reverses of the world ! But what is home ? Certainly not any arrangements of bricks and mortar, nor any set of means, however expensive, for providing material comfort ; these are not home. Home is the palace of the affections, the residence of the virtues, the place where mutual obligations and mutual sympathies fuse all hearts into one, the place where paternal authority is recognised, maternal tenderness is felt, and brothers and sisters find delight in exchanging the vital courtesies of friendship. But such a home is not the work of chance ; it is the hallowed fruit of the divinest influences communicated through an exemplary discharge of parental duty.

The working man must have such a home, he needs it more than any other ; but how many important means must be used for its attainment ! His first step is to keep it before the mind as something to be realized, and so to master the influences which spring from the parental relation that they may be used with a view to its realization. Seriously asking himself what, as a

parent, he ought to do ; what, with the means at his command, he is able to do ; he will at once earnestly and prayerfully commence doing it. Anxious to promote the welfare of his family, he will spare no pains to supply their temporal wants ; regarding this as his first vocation, he will exclude everything from his bill of expenditure till this is met. He will make home familiar with his presence, he will spend there every leisure moment he can command, cheering it by wearing a genial mood, inviting confidence, eliciting inquiry, and scattering around him hints of encouragement and caution. He will carefully avoid whatever is vulgar in conversation and deportment, knowing how easily it may be copied. He will treat even his children respectfully, aware that self-respect is the true source of deference and veneration for others. He will recognise the obligations which are laid upon him to seek their intellectual and moral culture ; he will regard it as binding upon him to forego a portion of the comforts of life, rather than suffer them to grow up in ignorance ; and especially will he deem it his most sacred privilege and duty to imbue their minds with those religious principles which afford the only sufficient guarantee that they will pursue a virtuous course in this life, and that they will be prepared for entering upon that which is to come.

III. It is the duty of the working man to help himself ; society calls upon him to discharge that duty ; but HOW SELDOM IS HE EITHER WILLING OR ABLE TO GIVE AN EFFECTUAL RESPONSE !

In the majority of cases he is utterly unable to con-

ceive of the advantages of knowledge, of the pleasure which accompanies refined habits, or of the sources of comfort which exist in an orderly dwelling and a well-trained family. It would be as easy to awake in the bosom of the Esquimaux a desire to exchange his snowy abode for the brighter habitations of Hindostan, or to inspire the Hottentot with a longing for the conveniences of civilized life, as to arouse within the minds of a large section of the lower grade of operatives an energetic resolve to raise their social condition. To create this determination it is necessary to change the inner man, in order that the external arrangements which have hitherto yielded satisfaction may do so no longer, and that it may spontaneously demand a different set of circumstances as the first requisite for happiness. But we have said that the first element in self-elevation is *intellectual culture*; this *must be possessed*, and, for a stronger reason, *the means of acquiring it*, before any permanent improvement can be expected in the physical and social condition of the working classes.

We are here brought face to face with that which is in many respects the great question of the day, we mean *the education of the people*. On this unhappily thorny topic we shall avoid whatever is merely disputatious, our aim being less to adjust the claims of hostile theories, than to illustrate and enforce what is practically admitted by all parties. We may, however, be permitted to submit that the controversy on this subject has hitherto been pursued on grounds which are too absolute and abstract, with too little discrimination of principles, and under the influence of predilections which defy the possibility of arriving at a

common result. On this, as on purely religious questions, the advocates of opposite systems have been more anxious to find out and magnify the points of difference, than to discover a stand-point of practical union; bent rather upon maintaining respective peculiarities of opinion in all their breadth, than ascertaining how far, without compromise of principle, they might work together. The existence of such discordant views renders it doubly necessary to urge the claims of the uneducated masses, lest they should be lost sight of in the hurry and din of conflict; to point out the infinitely greater importance of the object itself than that of any peculiarity in the method of gaining it; and to suggest whether knowledge, when once received into the mind, may not be able to furnish an effectual antidote to any evils which incidentally attach to the channel through which it is conveyed.

It is unquestionably the right and duty of every man to educate himself, and on similar grounds it is the right and duty of every parent to educate his children; it may however be the duty of others to assist us in discharging duties which are exclusively our own. This is, in fact, the foundation of all our relative duties; every man is sponsor for his fellow-man, each is his brother's keeper; we are bound to place among our personal obligations that of stimulating others to a sense of theirs. This obligation is universal, Christianity recognises it, and enlists it in the promotion of the highest spiritual ends; but it is as old as society, and springs from the primitive and necessary relation which man sustains to man. Mankind are not intended to remain so isolated from each other, that none needs

concern himself about the course pursued by those around him; it is the inalienable duty of each to do everything in his power to stimulate and help the rest in the discharge of duty. This duty is presented to society in another form. So mutually dependent are the interests of its members, that it is impossible for a large section to leave their personal obligations undischarged without injury accruing to all. Thus the sense of self-preservation is properly affected, and expediency, in the absence of a higher principle, obliges them to provide that such obligations shall be discharged. The neglect of personal duty by one section of society may tend to produce actions which society as a whole is bound to punish; in such a case consistency requires that all its energies be exerted in correcting the neglect from which they spring.

By such considerations education is proved to be a *social duty*. It belongs to individuals in relation to themselves, it belongs to society in reference to each other. Every man ought to educate himself and his children to his utmost ability; but if he is careless about doing it, or if his utmost ability for doing it is very small, it becomes the duty of others to stimulate and assist him. Ignorance is a great privation; the uneducated man is a stranger to a vast amount of happiness which his Creator intended him to enjoy; the purest fountains of pleasure are sealed to him, he is destitute of the mightiest instruments of action, he can work only in common toil, in him those capacities are sadly narrowed which enable an individual to live and act for God. Popular intelligence is one of the greatest aids, and popular ignorance one of the greatest obstacles to

social progress. The one increases, the other diminishes the capacity for individual improvement, the avenues and instruments of trade, the refinement of public manners, and the probability of a whole people becoming great and happy. Society does not exclude the uneducated man from its jurisdiction, neither does it admit ignorance as a valid excuse for crime; it dispenses laws which he is expected to keep, and specifies duties which it is incumbent upon him to fulfil; it creates a police, erects gaols, establishes courts of justice, and hangs before the crowd the terrors of exile or the scaffold. What a boon is intelligence to the individual man! what a blessing to the world! what a means of insuring obedience to law, by enabling the mind to appreciate the considerations on which it rests, and by raising it above those grovelling pursuits which usually lead to crime! Thus by the three-fold principle of benevolence, expediency, and consistency, society is bound to educate the people.

The recognition of popular education as a social duty does not involve the holding of any specific opinion respecting the mode in which that duty should be discharged, whether by individual effort, or by voluntary, municipal, parochial or government organizations. On this point it would be equally unbecoming and useless to enlarge; we will only direct attention to the class of persons upon whom the fulfilment of this duty, through some medium or other, chiefly devolves. There is a section of society in whom all social power resides. Sometimes this influential section consists of the numerical majority; sometimes of the most wealthy, the most intelligent, or the most religious. From this class

those influences proceed which operate powerfully for good or evil upon the condition of the rest; the individuals who compose it are the repositories of social power; they are responsible, not for themselves alone, but for the present and future welfare of the community; for all practical purposes they are society. If they perceive causes in silent operation which, in after years, may lay the social fabric in ruins, it is unpardonable culpability to remain satisfied with the right performance of their private duties; they are summoned to discharge a public one; this is as much their own as any of those which arise from the circumstances of private life. They are members of a community, this is the condition of their existence; Providence has placed them in a position which renders social cooperation essential to the promotion of their mutual welfare, and every benefit they received from this source was accompanied with a tacit agreement on their part to promote the interests of society in return.

It is impossible to point to any undisputed facts in reference to the number of children actually receiving instruction in schools of every sort throughout England. Mr. Charles Knight estimates the number of day-scholars at 2,200,000, and the combined number of day and Sunday-scholars at 3,500,000,¹ the latter of which would give one scholar to every five of the population. This is a high estimate, and would show that we are superior in point of the number of children in actual tuition, to all the continental and American states, with the exception of Bavaria and Pennsylvania. Independent facts, however, seem to indicate its cor-

(1) Companion to the British Almanac.

rectness, and at the same time give us a clue to the quality of the instruction imparted. In 47 cotton mills of Manchester, no less than $82\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the whole number of operatives were able to read; and out of 500 convicts in the prison of Pentonville, only 71 had never attended school, while the remaining 429 had been at school on an average of more than 4 years.¹ These facts make the vast amount of ignorance which exists, consistent with the large number of names on the school-roll. The instruction hitherto given has operated very slightly in deterring from the commission of crime. The number of criminals reported as wholly ignorant, has for several years been steadily decreasing; but the number of those reported as able to read and write has been steadily on the increase, leaving the absolute number of criminals but very slightly diminished. In the majority of schools the range of instruction is limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and in few does it extend beyond the elements of grammar and geography. Owing to the shortness of the time during which the pupil is allowed to remain at school, or the inefficiency of the tuitional system adopted in it, his acquaintance even with these subjects is very small. He can read, but reading with him is a merely mechanical process; it is an instrument of which he does not know the value, being quite ignorant of the literary and scientific treasures which it places within his grasp. He can write, but no better than he can read; he is able to describe the letters of the alphabet, form them into words, and imitate a copy

(1) Recent parliamentary debate on Mr. W. J. Fox's motion.

with tolerable exactness, but he can go no further. It is with the utmost difficulty he can frame a sentence ; he has no conception of those general laws of composition which enable a person to express his thoughts with propriety. Hence, both reading and writing are forgotten within a short period of leaving school. The recollection that they were once possessed, and that the ability to spell or scrawl out a few sentences still remains, is a pretension to scholarship which he seldom sees rivalled, and beyond which he has no wish to aspire. The nugatory character of the education which is given in ordinary day-schools is one reason of the little anxiety which parents manifest to procure the admission of their children. When good schools have been opened, in which the range of instruction comprehended, for example, the rudiments of drawing and music, parental rivalry has been most beneficially aroused. They saw the advantages of education in a form which they could appreciate, not merely its instruments and technicalities, but its fruits, and instantly endeavoured to procure them for their children. They looked with apathy upon mere reading and writing, but the scraps of scientific knowledge, the historic and geographical lore which were duly retailed every evening by the fire-side, together with the artless music, learned at school, which often made home gladsome, gave them new views of education, and an immeasurably deeper impression of its value. Generally speaking, the interest which, when once aroused, a parent feels in the intellectual achievements of his children is so intense, that if good schools were established at a moderate charge, nothing else would

be required to fill them with scholars, and to secure parental cooperation in the maintenance of discipline.

The *chief fault to be found with our educational practice* is, that the means of education are allowed to monopolize the time and effort which ought to be devoted to education itself. The elementary arts of reading and writing are based upon merely formal knowledge; they are the starting-post and not the goal of education. Instead of being taught chiefly in the abstract, they should be constantly applied to the purposes of mental discipline and information. Selections from approved standard authors might advantageously be interspersed with the ordinary course of reading. The principles of composition should be taught simultaneously with the progress of the pupil from "straight strokes;" as he proceeds he should be encouraged to express his thoughts in writing on familiar subjects, to copy interesting facts for his own use, and occasionally to address his teacher and fellow-scholars in an epistolary form. By such methods reading and writing would be rescued from degradation; having so thoroughly mastered their difficulties, and become familiar with their application to general subjects, the pupil would have no temptation to let them fall into disuse. But reading and writing, even thus applied, must not be suffered to constitute the entire range of instruction. History, geography, and grammar, the higher branches of arithmetic, the elements of geometry and algebra, the principles of music and drawing, the fundamental facts of astronomy and chemistry, the standard works of British literature, should all enter into it in due proportions. Such a

course, instead of loading the memory with dry and useless forms, would issue in a fair expansion of all the intellectual powers ; reason, judgment, imagination, would all in turn be appealed to, and the individual would be gradually trained for acting intelligently in the various departments and functions of human life.

In order to extend the range of popular instruction to such limits, a twofold provision is necessary : first, *the adoption of a more efficient system of primary instruction* ; and secondly, *the establishment of supplemental institutions where that instruction can be continued in adult years*. With regard to the former, its necessity has been generally recognised, and all classes of educationalists are aiming to supply it. The changes required are chiefly those which relate to the attainments of the teacher, and the amount of work which is given him to do. The average attainments of the great body of teachers are still inadequate to the efficient discharge of their important duties. Their professional and social status have acted injuriously on each other. The importance of their position has not been recognised, their labours have been poorly remunerated, the ignorance of the community has at once degraded and starved them. Hitherto any person has been deemed competent to the office of instructor ; those who have failed to gain a livelihood by mechanical pursuits, who have been disabled by sickness, or even by indolence, for laborious employment, have turned schoolmasters, and brought, by their venal quackery, a disgrace upon a most honourable profession. As intelligence advances, such cases will become more and more rare, till at length their toleration will be impos-

sible. The teacher must prepare to take his place among the first men of the age, his vocation is a noble one, the instruments of national glory or degradation reside with him, his character will leave its impress on the condition of thousands. It is not mere information which will fit him for his office, he must have a fund of generous sympathy and warm affection; his heart must be fired with philanthropic ardour, and glow with spiritual resolves; to raise up a band of religious and intelligent youth must be his steadfast aim. Society must second him in his endeavours, give him the means of suitable training, and diminish his work. In a commercial academy, intended for the sons of the middle classes, a master and three or four accomplished teachers are considered no more than sufficient for eighty or a hundred boys, whereas in schools intended for the children of the working classes, one individual has often twice that number under his sole charge. The monitor system deserves to be mentioned with gratitude, but it is a very imperfect substitute for the personal efforts of a trained master. The additional instruction the elder scholars receive is not sufficient to qualify them for the business of tuition. In education, as in agriculture, the magnitude of the crop depends upon the appliances which have been brought to bear upon the soil; in both, if we sow sparingly, we shall reap also sparingly; if we consign two hundred boys to one master, it is folly to expect much from his labours; distributed over so wide a space they must be comparatively inefficient. Of this he is painfully conscious, and hence results a serious discouragement. A conscientious teacher finds his chief reward, not in the

pecuniary equivalent of his labours, but in the progress of his pupils ; as they improve his work becomes less, while the motives to diligence are increased. Thus a flourishing school acts beneficially upon the teacher, stimulating him to more devoted exertions ; but if from any cause his efforts are paralysed, an opposite influence is exerted ; his zeal declines, a sense of unavoidable failure quenches every purer motive, and forces him to draw the necessary incentives to effort from the bare idea of pecuniary gain.

In order to insure a suitable range of instruction for the working classes, it is not only necessary to raise the quality of that which is given to the juvenile population ; institutions must be established in which its principles may be carried out during the subsequent years of youth and manhood. At the age of ten or twelve they are generally obliged to leave school, and betake themselves to manual labour, but in the majority of cases they might yet devote a portion of time, generally in the evening, to obtain instruction, if educational machinery were contrived with that special object in view. The best advantages enjoyed in early life will be lost if they are not sedulously cultivated. The educated professional man, if cut off from intercourse with books, and denied all opportunity of converse with kindred minds, soon grows intellectually barren ; in order to keep his present stores he finds it necessary to increase them. Still more is this the case with the labourer or mechanic, whose education is more elementary, and whose engagements are more averse to intellectual pursuits. By the use of suitable agencies, on the foundation which is laid in the youthful

mind by the instruction received at school, it is possible to rear those refined tastes, that love for the beautiful in art, that inquisitiveness into the mysteries of science, that wholesome veneration for antiquity, that progressive spirit which yearns with sympathetic hope over the coming age, which are the natural antagonists of degrading pleasures, and at once the ornaments and safeguards of the community to which they belong. These important ends are to be gained by the establishment of mechanics institutions ; by the formation of public libraries, and schools of design ; by exhibitions of painting, statuary, specimens of manufacturing skill, and other works of art ; by museums of natural history, antiquities, and physical science ; these will always form an invaluable element in the education of the people. Of themselves they would be sufficient to confer no small measure of intelligence, but they are chiefly valuable on account of their tendency to develop that intellectual life, the seminal germs of which were received in childhood. They are the *finishing schools* of the working classes, without which many of their previous acquirements will be lost. If the maxim is true when applied to private families, that the best education is the cheapest, it is eminently so here. On economical grounds the chief question should be, whether education shall be altogether withheld, or whether it shall be made as complete as the resources of society will permit.

Popular education has important purposes to subserve in the process of improvement ; it is imperatively needed under all circumstances, but especially at the present time. It would always confer immense advan-

tages upon society, but never was its agency invited to a nobler sphere than that which is opened to it in the existing condition of the working classes. It is required, for example, to *check the sensualizing tendencies of excessive toil*. The present age is preeminently a working one. More life is expended, and in less time, than formerly. Preternatural causes seem to have given an impetus to every branch of human enterprise. Events, any of which would be sufficient to give celebrity to a century, are crowded within a year or two. "Work faster" seems to be the decree which now hangs over man. To obey it, nature assists with her discoveries : steam and electricity have combined to change the aspects and prospects of the world. No department of labour can claim exemption from it. Whoever intends to make his way, or even to live, must work, and work incessantly. The merchant, the manufacturer, the professional man, so far from being exceptions to the rule, are perhaps its best exemplifications. It is true they toil with the head instead of the hands, but mental employment is no less laborious than manual, while it often monopolizes the time which he who works only with his hands can give up to sleep and recreation. It cannot be doubted that the excessive toil of the present age has a sensualizing tendency ; it employs the mind too long and too intensely upon material things ; leaves little time, and less disposition for contemplation ; tends to give everything a simply materialistic value, and thus to lessen the apparent importance of the spiritual and the eternal. The chief remedy for such an evil is to develop, with proportionable assiduity, the mental powers. Every hour which can be spared from necessary

pursuits must be devoted to reading and thought; the intellect must exert itself with so much energy, that the practical powers, notwithstanding their varied activity, may still be kept in abeyance, and spiritual views and purposes reign supreme over all the lower avocations of life. All classes need the application of this remedy; the diffusion of a taste for reading shows that in some quarters it is extensively applied; but none need it more than the working man. Upon this it depends whether he become a mere machine, dividing the whole of his time between bodily exertion and bodily repose—whether he toil in gloom, stimulated only by indulgence in coarse and frivolous conversation—whether, when his work is done, he find a fierce recreation in the quarrels of the dram-shop—or whether he work cheerfully, supplied, by a well-stored memory, with an exhaustless fund of pleasure, and find at home, in the acquisition of entertaining knowledge, a complete oblivion of care, and a buoyancy of spirit which will fit him for entering anew upon his daily calling. This is the blessing which education will bestow. The educated labourer is known by the cheerfulness of his disposition, the contented, yet enterprising spirit which animates his features, and the intelligence which gleams in his thoughtful eye. Labour has not sensualized *him*; on the contrary, allied with habits of reflection, it has developed virtues which would else have remained concealed, given those virtues maturity and strength, and made him what we may not inappropriately designate a *manly man*.

No less a blessing would education bestow upon the working classes *in checking political agitation*. We do

not deery an interest in political questions, when exercised within the limits the law allows, and with a due regard to consequences. It is an Englishman's privilege to discuss all public matters, and to aim at the redress of what he deems to be iniquitous or pernicious laws. Not only is such conduct not illegal, but our constitution recognises it as a binding duty upon every member of the state. Those institutions which we so justly prize, which place us in such an advantageous position when compared with other nations, and which are valuable, not only on account of the good they confer upon us now, but also for that which they promise for the future, were won and secured to us by the patriotic efforts of our forefathers. We may boast that the throne itself, so often the symbol of interests at variance with the interests of the people, is amongst us at once the safeguard and monument of freedom. But agitation has often been carried to most pernicious lengths, and for the avowed accomplishment of very questionable ends. Politics have again and again been the staple material of ruin to the working man. They have led him to the ale-house till his home grew strange to him, and he was better acquainted with the state of the public exchequer than his own. In the discussion of grievances he has made himself the victim of men who notoriously care only for themselves—not bad men, perhaps, in the ordinary sense of the word, but men who are actuated only by self-interest, a motive which may not always dovetail with the interests of their clients. Nothing is more sickening than to see a body of well-meaning, generous-hearted working men, neck-ridden by a political adventurer, freely giving him the

command of their confidence and their pockets for some object which he knows well it is beyond his power to attain. This is not the way to obtain a redress of grievances; that man takes the surest course who spends every leisure moment in improving himself, who masters the principles of political economy and general government, acquaints himself with literature and science, and above all displays his mental superiority in raising his physical and social condition. If all working men were to adopt a course like this, political privileges would be easily obtained; their appeals would then be irresistible.

Another object which popular education is adapted and required to gain, is the realization of *greater refinement in the domestic and social intercourse* of the working classes. There is a fictitious and a true refinement. The former springs from the desire to imitate the manners of those above us, with the view of increasing our own conventional value. Such refinement is cramped, and artificial; it springs from despicable motives, and seldom fails to make the person who affects it ridiculous. But there is a true refinement, which springs from cultivated tastes, from a mind well stored with knowledge, from a gentle and generous soul: it is not an accident or mere appendage, a thing made for the occasion, but a genuine effusion of the heart—a part of the living man. Many in condemning the former have overlooked the latter. The freedom and bluntness of our Saxon manners are apt to degenerate into vulgarity and rudeness. Working men too often eschew courtesy as a weakness, deliver themselves in the coarsest style, and seem to think any approach to blandness of expres-

sion a mark of effeminacy. How often, in domestic conversation, is every sentence pointed with a rude imperative. How often is the language of the shop a string of filthy metaphors which modesty cannot understand without a blush. How often is a surly question met with a surlier reply, and followed with execrations and blows. Such characteristics call loudly for reform. The working man should be in the truest meaning of the word a "gentleman." This distinction, the highest in a secular point of view to which any man can aspire, is within the reach of all. It is independent of wealth or social position ; it needs not for its support a spacious mansion, a noble equipage, a retinue of servants, or a host of workmen ; it requires only unaffected kindness and a cultivated mind. Nor is this an empty distinction, a merely gilded bauble : it is a positive blessing ; it confers substantial benefits upon its possessor ; it heightens the charm of social and domestic life, gives the polish and glow of beauty to the meanest matters, and strengthens the kindly sympathies from which it flows.

Finally, popular education is demanded as *an indispensable ally in the work of physical improvement*. We have already shown what in this department should be done for the working man, and what he should do for himself, but the possible extent of both is to be measured by the amount of intelligence he possesses. The wretchedness of his abode is often unperceived by himself, he has no sense of its existence, everything is just what he would choose it to be. If he could but be made the prey of a little wholesome dissatisfaction, more decent and comfortable arrangements would soon appear possible. He might then perceive that it would

be more economical to spend a shilling a week extra in removing to a drier and more airy situation, than to await the fever which annually visits his present abode. He might then reflect that the room in which his family sleeps, for a trifling outlay, could be well ventilated, and that this would be far better than to permit their health to be injured, by allowing them to breathe for six or seven hours daily, an atmosphere from which the vital element is almost entirely withdrawn. But this dissatisfaction can only be produced by intelligence; so long as he is ignorant, he is conscious of no higher wants than the cravings of his animal nature; there is no taste to gratify, no ingenuity to be displayed, no self-respect to be propitiated, no social status to be maintained. Even the conditions of health can be with difficulty understood. He does not recognise air as an entity except in a storm; that it consists of separable elements, or that its fitness to sustain life depends upon their relative proportions, is to him one of those innumerable myths of science which he cannot question, but which he does not heartily believe. Enlighten him in these mysteries, and while the knowledge itself will be a source of pleasure, his life will become at once healthier, happier, and longer. Let no effort be relaxed which enlarged benevolence can desire for bettering his condition, but above all things give him intelligence; without this it will be impossible for others to help him; with it he will be able, to a much greater extent, to do without their aid.

IV. We now proceed to consider the fourth general principle which must be acted upon in endeavouring to

raise the condition of the working classes,—A MORE PRACTICAL AND EARNEST MANIFESTATION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

We do not undervalue other remedies when we affirm that the chief remedy for existing evils would be *the hearty reception*, on the part of the masses, *of the glorious verities of the religion of Christ*. Others are subsidiary, this is chief; others may facilitate its operation, this alone can adequately meet the case; others may produce a partial and temporary amelioration, this alone could render it universal and permanent. Religion *could* dispense with them, their best effects could be produced in time by its own special agency; but they could not dispense with religion; for the realization of man's highest good they are powerless without it. All the social virtues have their root in piety ; intelligence, temperance, frugality, industry, self-reliance ; religion is the fountain whence they spring, and the all-embracing ocean to which they run. If the problem were given, to raise a people from the lowest dregs of degradation, to rescue them from self-inflicted poverty, to cure their vices, check disorder, promote unity, kindle a spirit of enterprise, and rear them to the stature of a flourishing and happy commonwealth; the solution might be given in a word—make them religious, bring them under the power of Christian principle, and the end is gained.

Christianity is misunderstood, it is therefore regarded with disfavour; the working man is prepared to regard it in any light rather than that of a sympathizing friend. The true aspect it bears towards him is veiled by prejudice, it is unconnected with his future hopes, it has no propitious influence on his present condition; it is the religion of his master, of the corporation, of the

government, but not his own. Such impressions are false; they embody a libel on the God-like system to which they refer ; let them be laid aside for a moment, and let us survey Christianity with that impartial candour which it deserves.

The chief attribute of Christianity is its spirituality. It comes to us from a Being who is invisible, and appeals to us concerning interests which are not appreciable by the senses. Its aim is, to ply us with motives springing from the unseen world, and to give the future a grand and invariable preponderance over the present. Its history is commensurate with the history of mankind, its first announcement was coeval with the fall, and from that moment all the events of Providence have been arranged to subserve its promotion. The way was prepared for it by an inferior economy of types and shadows, by a series of the most remarkable events, and by the fulfilled predictions of inspired men. At length, when the fulness of time was come, the Son of God appeared amongst us in the likeness of man, submitted to poverty, suffering and death, in order that he might furnish to the world the means of obtaining the Divine forgiveness. Benevolence could not paint a nobler object than that which Christ came to achieve ; that object was simply to reconcile us to God ; but who can grasp the sublime comprehensiveness of such an aim ? It includes an entire change in our relations, our character, and our condition. It seeks to change the relation which, as guilty creatures, we sustain to the Divine government, to reverse the sentence of condemnation which justice has recorded against us, to silence those apprehensions which agitate the soul at the thought of

God, and to inspire it with those filial feelings which will make communion with Him a source of pleasure. It seeks to change the heart, to fill it with noble wishes, adorn it with pure affections, take away the very desire for sin, and secure the glad submission of our whole nature to the Divine will. It seeks to make us happy, laying the axe to the root of those vices which make us miserable, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." ¹ Christianity has thus an end of its own, an end of the noblest kind; it is independent of all other systems, it neither leans upon them for support, nor is responsible for their follies. The love of God is its origin; its justification is found in our own misery; its credentials spring from a long series of fulfilled predictions and miraculous events, from the sublimity of its doctrines and the loftiness of its morals; its arguments derive irresistible force from the experienced wants of our nature; while its objects are associated with our well-being both for time and eternity. Hence Christianity has an imperative claim upon the acceptance of every man; to despise it is the darkest ingratitude, to reject it is the wildest folly.

Christianity is not only spiritual in its nature, but eminently *catholic in its sympathies*. *It is wedded to no political creed*. It is the sworn friend of justice, and the determined enemy of oppression; but it broaches no specific theory of social rights, and dictates no specific form of national government. Its spirit sanctified the

(1) Titus ii. 12, 13.

patriarchal authority of ancient times, commended submission to the absolute autocracy of the Cæsars, guards with its sanctions the regal office, and takes republics as well as empires under its fostering wing. Content with reproving wickedness wherever it is found, with fixing in the heart the seminal principles of all good, Christianity eschews unholy warfare, and calmly awaits the peaceful evolution of its purposes. *Neither has Christianity any favouritism of race.* Its message is the same to all. Its proclamation broke down the barrier which had theretofore separated Jew and Gentile, and made them thenceforth one. It disclaims those distinctions which avarice and ambition have erected amongst mankind, and recognises them all as springing from a common fatherhood. It holds out the hand of equal sympathy to the Caucasian and the Malay, and binds with the same ties of friendship both the civilized and the savage. It furnished the first ameliorative element to the intercourse of nations; in the person of its apostles it traversed the length and breadth of the Roman world, breaking the dominion of conquest, annihilating national jealousies, and teaching everywhere the reciprocal rights and duties of humanity. While the buccaneer and freebooter plied a recognised trade, and captured strangers were everywhere looked upon as lawful slaves, Christianity was enforcing upon the philosophers of Mars' Hill the common brotherhood of mankind. Still her sympathies are world-wide, as of old; the angel of the everlasting gospel is charged with a commission "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." *Christianity has no preference for rank.* Her blessings are bestowed equally on bond and free. Honouring the

institutions of civil society, and recognising those variations of social position which spring legitimately from social laws, in reference to the objects she seeks to promote, she regards all men as equal. Into the church no earthly distinctions enter ; there the monarch lays aside his crown, and the peasant forgets his poverty. In order the more strikingly to exhibit this peculiar feature of his religion, Christ himself became poor, selected his companions from the poor, and accounted it one of the proofs of the Divinity of his mission that the gospel was preached to the poor. In the early days of the church, the same spirit was manifested by his followers. The Epistle of Paul to Philemon may be referred to as a beautiful exposition of the spirit which, according to apostolic authority, should subsist between Christian servants and Christian employers. Christianity throws into the shade the artificial distinctions which exist among men, by bringing out those great attributes in which they all agree. All are alike fallen, responsible, and immortal ; in the presence of these august and awful resemblances who shall dare to mention those accidents of birth and wealth in which they differ ? In the gospel not a passage occurs which can favour the suspicion that external circumstances of any kind can render one individual more eligible to its reception than another. Its invitations in all cases are couched in the same terms, and are pressed with the same degree of urgency ; they are given freely, and are given to all.

Though Christianity aims chiefly at promoting the spiritual interests of man, its influence on his temporal condition is largely and necessarily beneficial. On this account alone it might challenge the admiration of the

world. If it were proved to have no influence in fitting us for the life to come, it might still claim our grateful adhesion for the happiness it is capable of conferring upon the life which now is. Its adaptation to ameliorate the physical condition of man has been proved by experiments on every scale, and under every variety of circumstances. It is seen in the relative degrees of the prosperity of nations. Where evangelical truth is most influential, there wealth abounds and liberty prevails. Where priestcraft has proscribed the sacred volume, and papal superstition broods over the intellects of the people, there freedom is an empty name, and all the elements of national greatness are unknown. The progress of modern missions has enabled us to ascertain the actual effects of the gospel when received by a barbarous people. In Greenland, in the West Indies, the isles of the Pacific and in Western Africa, in every quarter of the globe, under every variation of temperature, and amongst every variety of the human species, the same effects have followed. Towns and villages have sprung up in the desert, the pursuits of agriculture have supplanted those of the chase, theft and piracy have given way to lawful commerce, and tribes that once lived in open war are now bound by the reciprocal ties of friendship. Flax and cotton have been spun into clothing, or exchanged for the productions of other climes ; the dens of cannibalism have been turned into human abodes ; disease has been combated by the skill of science instead of the cruelties of witchcraft ; and the besotted slaves of sensuality have been roused to a sense of their spiritual manhood. In many instances, similar results have followed the reception of Christian

truth at home. Hundreds never knew how to read till their conversion ; that great change broke the fetters of the mind, and developed intellectual powers which would else have continued dormant, and made them the ornaments at once of society and the church. Nor is it difficult to account for the effects which have thus been produced. Man is *without*, exactly what he is *within*. He is visibly what he is really. The arrangements of domestic life reveal to us the coarseness or the delicacy, the rudeness or the refinement—in a word, all the noble or degrading sympathies of the mind by which they were conceived. Make the soul a paradise, and kindred beauty will bloom around. Exalt, refine and stimulate with Christian principle, let the chambers of the heart be hung with the sumptuous drapery of truth, and the superiority of man over the brute creation will shine undimmed, the vestiges of vice will vanish from his outer life, poverty will lose its sting, and misfortune cast no shadow. Christianity fully realized in the hearts of men, would issue in a new creation ; the regenerated soul of humanity would make for itself a regenerated world. Without violence, softly as the footsteps of receding darkness, would selfishness and impurity disappear, and the sacred morn of truth and freedom break upon the world.

It is the misfortune of Christianity to be made responsible for the deficiencies of its adherents. Its beams, like those of the sun, have to pass, in reaching us, through a cloudy region, and often seem distorted and obscured, but this distortion and obscurity reside not at the fount of light, they are gathered on its passage hither. No aspersion has been deemed too foul for

Christianity ; she has been spared no insult at the hand of her impious foes. It has been insinuated that she is an enemy to learning, liberty, and progress ; that she sides with the oppressor against the oppressed ; that her smiles rest more complacently upon the rich than upon the poor ; that she has kindled in society the flame of fratricidal strife, and whetted the steel for war. She has been branded as the pampered child of privilege, a miserable device of priestcraft, a cunningly devised fable, a phantom, a cheat, a bubble which is destined to burst on the reef of time. Offspring of heaven ! what hast thou done to be thus an object of envy and hatred to mankind ? Is it for this that thou hast braved the flames of martyrdom, overcome the tyranny of the Cæsars, softened the barbarism of the Goth, and lapped the nations in the fruits of peace ? Is it for this that thou hast trodden the earth in quest of suffering, hast heard the cry of the captive ; broken the fetters of the slave, cheered by thy consolations the orphan and the widow, made the poor man's cottage happier than the courts of princes, and thrown over the last hours of this earthly existence the radiance of immortality ? How great must be the blindness or the ingratitude of mankind, if they can fail to appreciate such blessings, or can recompense them with mockery and reproaches.

Never was there uttered a fouler calumny than that which denounces Christianity as inimical to the progress and liberties of man. Instead of this, her career has been identical with the process of the world's growth, its various stages have been synchronous with the permanent advances of justice and humanity. Previous to the Christian era society was based upon no settled

principles; for four thousand years its history records a succession of experiments and failures; it had "motion but no progress." Empires suddenly rose to a gigantic height, and then crumbled to ruin. The facility with which they were raised in a few years to an amazing pitch of greatness, places in a melancholy light the pliancy of the materials of which they were composed; men could count for nothing in a state of things which enabled one man so easily to grasp the control of millions. The world was then a social Egypt, its populations were gathered into a few huge pyramids, of which the tops alone are visible in the lapse of time; despotism, sometimes dazzling, was enthroned upon their summits, but below, how ominously dark! what social wretchedness fretted hopelessly around their base! The cries of poverty have perished on the winds, ten thousand desert graves enclose the victims of irresponsible satraps, of famine, proscription, massacre and war; tyranny hushed the tale of their sufferings, but human nature remains unchanged, and no voice from the past is needed to tell us what the world must have been when one man was worshipped as a god and all the rest were slaves. Christianity has changed the scene, she has not yet done all that it is in her purpose and her power to do, but she has taken a gigantic stride towards it. She has created the elements of social strength, multiplied the affinities and attractions which hold the atoms of the mass together, and thus rendered it less easy to mould it into shapes of oppression. She has asserted the common origin and the essential equality of man, brought out his individuality and stamped it with a higher value, forced into general recognition the great principles

of justice which should control the conduct of men and nations, and is gradually changing the world into a community of friendly and mutually dependent states. She made her appearance at a time when the last of the great empires of antiquity was about to culminate, and won her earliest triumphs on a soil which was radiant with classic lore : when the northern barbarians devastated Europe, and literature and freedom forsook it in dismay, she stayed behind and commenced that work of civilization which at length enticed them back. During the middle ages, Christianity, though debased in its character, was still a temple of refuge to the oppressed. The serfs, the working classes of those days, found in her a constant friend. Her voice was lifted up in their behalf when every other tongue was silent; to the influence she secretly exerted upon the condition and sentiments of society our working classes are indebted for two great blessings, the social enfranchisement of labour, and the recognition by the legislature of the right of poverty to support. Wherever she fixes her abode the mists of superstition vanish; her voice enkindles the flame of genius, prompts the discoveries of science, and calls into existence the arts which soften and embellish life; her sympathies are commensurate with the claims of universal right, she lives among the splendours of supreme perfection, her career is one of ever-widening and ever-during conquest. Her mission is not over, every day fulfils it; her soul is still pregnant with schemes of happiness for the world; let man but accept her immortal boon, and the work of philanthropy would soon be done.

When from this view of Christianity we turn to look

at its reception by the masses of the people, we are prompted to ask, what can have given rise to the hostility with which they greet its claims? Surely powerful influences of some sort must have been at work to produce so strange a phenomenon. Why is not the Divine message accepted? Why is a scheme which is fraught with good-will to man rejected with scorn? This result may to some extent be owing to the enmity with which it is natural in man to regard the things of God; but apart from this, it is impossible not to perceive that the result is affected by numerous secondary causes, the removal of which is peculiarly our own vocation. In the first place, it must be acknowledged with sorrow that Christianity is paralysed in its professors. Their exhibition of its principles is weak or spurious, it has not attained sufficient mastery over their own conduct, its sovereignty in their hearts is divided with rival sentiments; their activity in the cause of religion proceeds too plainly from a large mixture of inferior motives, is too arbitrary, mechanical and spasmodic. They do not uniformly exhibit that high-toned morality, that cordial benevolence, that all-embracing sympathy with suffering, that entire surrender at whatever cost to the principles of the gospel, which are required to bring out the genius of Christianity, and to evince the sincerity of their own belief. The professors of Christianity exhibit in their intercourse with each other a spirit which is too often the very reverse of that which it inculcates. Love is no longer recognised as the highest Christian virtue; mere doctrinal agreement, extending to the non-essential portions of our common faith, has been silently exalted over it. Accustomed chiefly to think about, and struggle

for, the less important articles of religion, their spiritual life has lost its native vigour; they are fired with no zeal, filled with no outbursting consciousness of a lofty mission; they have dwindled down to the littleness of those petty distinctions with which they have almost identified their religious existence. The names which distinguish the various sections of the church of Christ are, with scarcely an exception, suggestive of something confessedly non-essential. Churchman and Dissenter, Calvinist and Arminian, Baptist and Pædobaptist, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism; to what do these names point? certainly not to Christ; they have eclipsed that ancient name by which the church was known in its palmyest days. That name must be restored to its rightful ascendancy, Christ must be recognised as supreme, it must be known everywhere that we account those names as nothing compared with that with which we associate our highest hopes.

Christianity is associated (to a great extent necessarily) with established interests, and hence incurs a share in the odium which they sometimes excite. On examining British society we cannot avoid discovering that there exists a partial alienation of classes. It is growing less every day, soon may it have vanished! but its present existence is undoubted. The institutions of the country are regarded with disfavour, and religion, as one of the most powerful, comes in for its share of unpopularity. Government recognises it by a formal profession, the laws are enacted under its sanctions, property is fenced round with its support; respectability, if no higher principle, attaches to it the aristocracy of rank and wealth; hence the working classes are prejudiced against

it: true, their prejudices may be unfounded and unjust, but men do not care to be logical in their feelings, and they are not on that account the less real. The physical and intellectual condition of the working classes is exceedingly unfavourable to the reception of Christian truth. They are worn out with excessive toil, they have no time for reflection, solitude is a luxury which they cannot obtain, and for which they have no relish. Popular ignorance presents a foe still more formidable. Christianity appeals to intelligence, and can never be severed from it; it exacts a reasonable service; its truths are embodied in the written word, for the perusal and due comprehension of which a facile use of the common instruments of learning is absolutely necessary. Without some measure of mental discipline, oral teaching, the great instrument which Christ ordained for converting the world, must be comparatively inefficient, in consistency with which we are not to expect the universal triumph of the gospel till "many run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The utmost simplification of thought and luminousness of expression will not release the hearer from the necessity of considerable mental effort, and the purer the form of Christianity which is inculcated, the higher the degree of intelligence which is required. Romanism, for example, has little need for such a refined instrumentality; that form of worship kindles devotion through the medium of the senses, and makes the imagination the chief means of mastering the soul. But Protestantism must die without knowledge; in dispensing with a gorgeous ritual, and renouncing all pretension to infallibility, we abandon acknowledged sources of power, and truth demands that

their loss be compensated by such a diffusion of intelligence as will enable men to yield a reasonable homage to her claims. While a large portion of the working classes are thus unfavourably situated, by the want of intelligence, for the appreciation of religious truth, the intellectual influences which act on the remainder are anything but propitious. The press is fearfully prolific, ungodly productions of all sorts are continually pouring from it, sensualism and infidelity are the staple food of thousands, numerous penny publications circulate in our large towns in which the lowest tastes are sedulously consulted, and the vilest passions are pandered to. In the higher reading circles, and within the limits of religious denominations, the religious press maintains a respectable position, but among large sections of the working classes its productions are scarcely known, there irreligion holds entire mental monopoly. Meanwhile the pulpit is comparatively shorn of its power, to a great extent its ministrations are languid and mechanical; it gives no certain sound, its denunciations seem to buffet the air, its teaching awakes no vital response within the soul; its traditional influences are still strong with the middle classes, but with the mass of the people its strength is gone; either they neglect Divine worship, or to them nothing is half so dry and profitless as a sermon.

Considering the operation of such causes, it is no marvel that, with all its excellence, Christianity should fail in winning the affectionate adherence of our working men. This result may be accounted for without supposing that human depravity is invincible, or that the influences of the Spirit are bound. As long as such causes are allowed to work, it will be vain to look for

the complete evangelization of our native land. Without such an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power as we have no reason to expect, the conversion of the working classes is, under existing circumstances, impossible. God has left the task of removing external hindrances in our hands; the valley must be exalted, the mountain and hill must be made low, the rough places must be made smooth, and the crooked places straight, before the glory of the Lord can be revealed. Christian principle must become more transparent, more energetic, more uncompromising, more masterful, more affectionately earnest, before Christianity itself can be enthroned in the affections of the people. Let us briefly point out a few of the methods by which we may hope to attain this result.

First, in contemplating, as her peculiar task, the evangelization of the working classes, the church o. Christ may fitly indulge in general and solemn preparation for it. Humiliation for the past will be the appropriate precursor of determined efforts for the future. Penetrated with a sense of individual responsibility and neglect, let each of the followers of Christ present himself at the footstool of mercy, to obtain that measure of Divine help which shall henceforth secure his entire devotedness to the cause of truth. Christianity must be learned afresh, its first principles must be re-examined, we must contemplate its sublime disclosures till they produce in us their proper effects. Spiritual-mindedness must be produced by frequent communion with the invisible; our impressions of the value of the soul must be deepened, those sensual illusions which betray us into a false estimate of present

things, and keep us, like the boy in his butterfly pursuit, busily engaged in chasing trifles, must be displaced by noble and truthful thoughts. We must acquire the habit of looking steadily upon the highest good, and of estimating the value of all besides by the relation it holds to its attainment. In the choice of models for the guidance of our Christian life we must go back to the apostolic age, hear from the lips of Christ the exposition of our duties, and mark how sublimely it was illustrated in the lives of himself and his disciples. In a word, we must become Christians in reality—we must aspire *to be* all which in its fullest meaning that name denotes; to realize and exhibit the strongest influences of truth, to rise to the highest possible pitch of calm enthusiasm and heroic self-denial which truth can inspire, should be the scope of our ambition. Such an augmentation of piety would rouse the thoughtless and sceptical of all classes, a new spirit would seem to have descended upon the church of Christ, a pentecostal energy, to whose resistless force the strongest intrenchments of the powers of darkness would be compelled to yield.

Entering thus spiritually prepared upon the discharge of its solemn duties, the Christian church must also be evidently actuated by the purest motives. There is amazing power in the impression that an individual is honestly endeavouring to promote our welfare. Though we think him mistaken in his principles, and care not a straw for what he seems so anxious to impart, yet his sincerity places him beyond our ridicule, and gradually gains upon our esteem. But generally if a person of intelligence is thus interested on our behalf, we are

induced to think that some value must attach to the object of his exertions, and we are led to examine it for ourselves. This is precisely the impression it is desirable that the professors of Christianity should communicate to the working classes of Great Britain. The impression actually conveyed is just the reverse. The working man imagines that his spiritual welfare awakes no honest concern; he imputes the anxiety which he sometimes hears expressed for his conversion, to sectarian zeal; he has no idea that the church of Christ is moved towards him with profound compassion; could he once be really assured of this, his hostility would be disarmed. The question is, how can such an assurance be produced?

Self-sacrifice is, in one form or other, the invariable and exclusive proof of sincerity; the world requires the proof, let it be promptly given. Let every modification of religious selfishness be eschewed. Selfishness in religion prompts us to rest satisfied with *personal enjoyment*, to sit under our own vine and fig-tree, to think of no vineyard but our own, to ask no one to share with us in the sumptuous repast, to feel the blessedness of religion undisturbed by any recollection of the myriads who are perishing without it. Selfishness in religion prompts us *to attempt nothing unless we are sure the result will be visibly connected with our own efforts*, to do nothing if it is not to be blazoned forth to the world, to prefer those modes of doing good which are most showy, to give our alms at the corners of the street, and blow a trumpet when we wish to pray. Selfishness in religion prompts us *to labour more for our own sect than for the common objects of Christianity*; it fosters the impression that all is lost which is not given to promote

our own peculiar views, and leads us to listen with a degree of jealousy which we should be ashamed openly to acknowledge, to the success which may have been enjoyed by other sections of the church than that to which we belong. Such forms of selfishness must be banished from amongst us for ever, if the world is to count us honest. "If I really held your creed," said a sceptic to a remonstrant friend, "I could give myself no rest. The conviction that my fellow-creatures were in danger of perishing, and that I possessed the knowledge of a method which could effect their rescue, would overwhelm me, if I did not daily task my energies to save them." The satire is just, we will submit to be instructed by an enemy. Our faith and practice must be more consistent; at the Saviour's bidding we must "go forth into the highways and hedges." Our sympathies must gather more exclusively around the soul, the inhabitants of our lanes and cellars must be made to feel that it is of infinitely greater consequence that they become the genuine subjects of piety, than that they practise the outward forms of Churchism or Dissent; that their children are gathered into our Sabbath-school, not to become the proselytes of a sect, but the catechumens of the universal church, and that all the purposes of evangelical solicitude will be answered if they are rescued from the power of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

If it is important to the evangelization of the working classes that the efforts of the church of Christ on their behalf should be evidently sincere, it is specially so that the ministers of the gospel should possess their confidence and esteem. The institution of the ministry is

one of the practical forms in which Christianity meets the eye of the people. True, it is independent of its essence, at most it is only an important adjunct of the Christian scheme; but prejudice makes no subtle distinctions; popularly, religion is one with its ministers, and the same honour or dishonour is put upon both. Moreover the pulpit is the right arm of Christian agency, it is the appointed means of bringing men to a knowledge of the truth; but prejudice will cripple its power; to breathe on its character is to blight its usefulness; it is impossible for moral benefits to be conveyed through a medium which is held in contempt.

The ministers of the gospel do not, as a body, hold that position among the working classes which is necessary to extensive success. They are regarded as chiefly actuated by mercenary considerations. Their work is degraded into a profession, and their efforts in the cause of religion are set down to a desire for personal advancement. How often has the most disinterested piety been forced to weep at finding the sacred office reduced, in the popular estimation, to a mere expedient, sanctioned by superstition, for gaining a respectable maintenance! That unworthy men have sometimes assumed the duties of the Christian ministry for merely selfish ends, is unhappily too true, but that such a censure is generally applicable we hesitate not to deny. Still the disposition to record such a censure is a significant fact, and indicates an evil of some sort which calls loudly for removal. That an office which was instituted by Christ himself, and which he adorned by the labours of the holiest life, should be inherently hostile to the interests of the people, is impossible.

Injustice or inconsistency, or a blending of both, must exist somewhere. It may be that a higher degree of humility and zeal is requisite for approaching the Scripture model of a Christian minister, and that, on the other hand, unfounded prejudices have thrown dust into the people's eyes, and prevented them from recognising their truest friends. Let the evil be corrected on both sides. Let the working classes be assured of a fact which they will some day acknowledge, that no set of men are more disinterestedly devoted to their welfare than the ministers of the gospel; that hundreds whom they look upon with suspicion, whom, when they see them near their dwellings, they inwardly denounce as hypocrites, would cheerfully make any sacrifice in order to promote their happiness. And can the ministers of religion do nothing to win back the confidence of the people? Is it impossible, without neglecting their peculiar duties, or infringing upon the appropriate sanctity of their character, to evince a larger measure of sympathy with popular feelings and popular movements? Have not schemes been suffered to languish, or else to be wielded to the detriment of religion, which a little timely aid from them might have rendered vigorous and useful? Public opinion is perhaps justly censurable for such results, but it is high time for the ministers of religion to eschew false delicacy. Freedom of conscience must be conceded and practised in action as well as in belief. Every man in acting for God is sacred as the ark which Uzzah touched, and for the touching of which God slew him. Let the ministers of Christianity drink deep into her own noble, generous, and fearless spirit, approve themselves henceforth as the

teachers and shepherds of the poor, seize with a friendly grasp the hand of labour, discuss the circumstances and opinions of the working man at his cottage hearth; by such methods confidence will be won, apathy and suspicion will give way to esteem, and it will be found that religion, whatever else it may be, is at least manly, rational and benevolent.

If the pulpit is by Divine appointment one of the chief means of enforcing truth upon the conscience, it is of the highest importance that its ministrations should be clothed with vigour. To say that in this respect it is at present deficient, is only to echo a sentiment little short of universal. The ministers of religion themselves are sensible of the deficiency, and are striving in various ways to correct it. Some are endeavouring to do so by means of more subtle reasonings and a more refined address; others by looking for the staple matter of their preaching in the minor doctrines of Christianity, or in the relations it sustains to history, philosophy, and science; others cling with unintelligent tenacity to recognised creeds, are more anxious than ever to express old doctrines in old formulas, delight in using, with all their offensive peculiarities, the phraseology of certain theological schools, and too often succeed, by sounding the tinkling cymbal of orthodoxy, to cheat themselves and their hearers of substantial truth. These methods are false, and must ultimately fail. The great and sole requisites for the efficiency of the pulpit are spirituality, earnestness, and common sense; and in the production of these qualities intelligence and faith must be combined. The communications of the New Testament

must be felt to embody eternal verities—to possess innumerable affinities with the soul, and to be capable, under the promised influence of the Holy Spirit, of correcting all the evils which have been produced by sin. These communications, perceived in their vital connexion with human happiness, must be conveyed to others with all the fervour which a sense of their value can inspire. The pulpit ought never to be confounded with the professor's chair; the laboured theme, the polished and accurately balanced essay, the careful avoidance of everything like enthusiasm, so well fitted to attain the purposes of the latter, are worse than useless in the former; their introduction into the pulpit betrays utter ignorance of the conditions on which the success of a public speaker depends, and the practice of a similar method at the bar or in the senate would involve a total failure. The first and last element of popular oratory is power—the power which springs from vigorous thought conjoined with earnest feeling. Effeminacy, indolence, affectation, ignorance, or mental imbecility, may be tolerated in any one rather than in the preacher, and must be most heartily repudiated by all who aspire to be worthy of the name.

In a word, the great want of this and of every age in relation to the pulpit, is a discriminating and earnest manifestation of Christian truth,—a manifestation not only of its connexion with the discoveries of human reason, but of its own positive and absolute essence as a scheme of saving mercy revealed by heaven. Such a manifestation will bring out into bold relief those doctrines which constitute its distinguishing

peculiarities, the Deity of Christ, the atoning efficacy of his death, the necessity of the new birth, and of the agency of the Spirit in producing it. These doctrines are the living strength of Christianity ; without them it is a solemn nullity, a sublime impertinence. To blink them, to speak of them in an apologetic strain, to wish that they were brought forward in the Scriptures with somewhat less prominence, is treason to their claims. Their seeming antagonism with the teachings of true philosophy lies only on the surface, a realization of their meaning by the aid of earnest and prayerful thought would show how intimately they are connected with every fragment of discoverable truth in life and nature. Let them be boldly taught, they carry with them their own demonstration ; they have a correspondence with the wants of our fallen nature which arms their simple manifestation with irresistible power. Discrimination in stating truth will often dispense with the necessity of argument. Let but the truth as it is in Jesus be intelligently and earnestly proclaimed, and error, like Dagon before the ark of the Lord, will be discomfited by the presence of its enemy, and the cross, re-invested with its own attractive powers, will soon fulfil the prediction of its illustrious victim by drawing all men unto it.

But methods are nothing without principles ; and principles, truly felt, are sure to create the means which are necessary to make themselves efficient. The possible instrumentalities of Christian zeal are innumerable, capable of being wielded by individuals of every intellectual grade, and of employing all the material and spiritual resources of Christians. They

include every agency by which the way of salvation may be communicated to others—the ministrations of the sanctuary, the instruction of the young, the way-side conversation, the diffusion of religious publications by millions among our cottage homes, district visitations, Christian instruction societies, city and rural missions, every species both of organized and individual effort. Let but the church of Christ be duly elevated, and these instrumentalities will come into existence of their own accord. Christianity is living truth ; it is free from everything artificial, from mechanism, and from coercion ; its doctrines extend, its principles become efficacious, and its converts are multiplied by virtue of its own spiritual processes—processes as natural and spontaneous as the germinating of the hidden seed, or the budding of the flower. Pour, then, upon us, Eternal Spirit ! the gifts of love ; expand our selfish hearts by thy genial influence, and so array before us the claims of our benighted countrymen, that every inferior feeling may be swallowed up in a zeal to promote their rescue. Then shall religion break forth on every side, “the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

CHAPTER III.

THE CLAIMS OF THE WORKING CLASSES, AND THE BENEFITS,
BOTH TEMPORAL AND RELIGIOUS, WHICH WOULD SPRING
FROM THEIR ELEVATION.

It is one of the chief maxims which we deduce from the existence of a moral government, that justice and utility, rectitude and true happiness, invariably include each other ; that however divergent, or even opposite, their interests seem at present, they will meet in the same point at last. A conviction of this kind is characteristic of the lowest faith in the existence of a supreme Governor, but it is too frequently supposed that the scene of its realization will be exclusively the future life. The present state is erroneously supposed to lie under the entire sovereignty of evil principles, and a final reckoning is deemed necessary to give the faintest colour of equity to the existing series of events. This is the exaggeration of an indubitable fact. Conscience and Scripture alike attest that "God will judge the world," and this judgment is necessary to fill up the measure of punishment and reward ; but God rules in this world as absolutely as in the next, and the exceptions to an equitable distribution of good and evil are fewer than a superficial observer might imagine. Sin works evil, and only evil, everywhere ; within the soul it works "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath," and all those passions which render man a self-tormentor ;

while every sinful act which finds its way into the outer world receives there an immediate chastisement. The laws of matter and of society are subordinated to a moral government, and can only operate in the furtherance and reward of well-doing. Hence we may conclude that in everything connected with social economics, justice is the highest expediency, and every act of enlightened benevolence redounds to the welfare of the doer. Thus the apparently discordant interests of society are held together by a mystic chain, and blend in a common unity. Opposition of interests is a thing impossible, the semblance of it can only exist when we are blinded by selfishness; amidst the social changes which may be expected as man presses forward in his career, all that need be asked, whether to stimulate or console us, is simply this, Do they flow legitimately from a legitimate principle? If so, all will be well, we may safely trust them. In the highest and truest sense a surrender to truth is a surrender to ourselves; every act of philanthropy is a stone in the fabric of our own happiness. A guinea spent by society in improving the condition of its members, will in time contribute ten to the common exchequer; the elevation of one class will tend to secure the substantial and permanent elevation of all.

Having in the preceding chapters considered the condition of the working classes, and attempted to point out the chief means of promoting their elevation, we wish, in the space which remains, to group together very briefly the chief benefits which would accrue from the accomplishment of that object. Those benefits are prospective, they speak in the language of allurements; but there are a few preliminary considerations which exhibit

in the light of obligation the course of effort which they will combine to reward ; and to these we will first direct attention.

The most obvious fact in the condition of the working classes is not the least impressive, namely, that *they are by far the largest portion of the community*. They constitute the majority of almost every town and village in the empire. Only a few dwellings in the secluded hamlet can be pointed out as the residence of wealth, the rest are inhabited by the sons of toil. In the numerous villas which grace the approaches of our large towns we recognise, with feelings of patriotic pleasure, the abodes of our merchant princes, while a large number of humbler dwellings in their neighbourhood may be assigned to those who are following them with a busy step in the road to wealth : but to whom belong those dingy masses of brickwork extending over hundreds of acres nearer the centre of business, and which, when viewed from a distance, resemble an irregular stratum deposited by the hand of nature, instead of the habitations of man ? These are the abodes of labour, there are hived up the myriads of the people, there they live and die ; their existence almost forgotten by the busy world without, except when perchance they are brought out in startling array by a holiday show or the voice of famine.

The claims of the working classes, rendered imposing by their numbers, are made imperative by past neglect. The duties which are implied in the very nature of the social compact, and the peculiar obligations which Christianity enjoins, have been violated in the persons of our poorer brethren. With the exception of a

legislative enactment now and then aimed at the redress of some glaring wrong, nothing has been done, till very recent times, for the improvement of the masses. For ages subsequent to the Conquest their existence was hardly recognised, except when goaded to the verge of rebellion, or enlisted under the banners of contending chiefs. In later times, when it might be expected that a maturer civilization would have produced better fruits, the lower orders, the "*profanum vulgus*" of classic circles, were held in refined contempt. The growing influence of the burgher class was evidenced in the increasing ascendancy of the House of Commons in the national councils, but the classes below them existed in a state of comparative villanage. With what derision would the wits of the Restoration have hailed any plan which professedly aimed at the enlightenment of the masses! Even in better times the progress of healthy feeling was extremely slow; the Augustan age of English literature was distinguished by no generous sympathies for the people; the uneducated multitude excited but little interest in the proud republic of letters. Those great men, whose writings have rendered the beginning of the eighteenth century the most brilliant era in our literary annals, were troubled with none of the qualms of an excessive philanthropy. What with politics abroad and poetry at home, the intrigues which infested the court, and the artificial notions which paralysed society, no room was left in the mind of that age for so utopian an idea as that of elevating the people. Nor can the various Christian communities of the land be exempted from blame in this matter. The Establishment, to which we look first as the authorized instructor of the people, was

far from evincing, for ages subsequent to the Reformation, that vigorous religious life which has more recently been developed within its pale. With the clergy, as well as with the laity, those were the days of party strife, or of learned leisure. The nation is not without political obligations to the former; while the writings of such men as Tillotson, Atterbury, Warburton, and Butler will always rank among the most eloquent apologies and expositions of the Christian faith; but we look in vain to this quarter during those times for a keen appreciation of popular wants. If we turn to the various grades of Protestant dissenters, we find them engaged in measures of self-defence, rather than in diffusing religion amongst the crowds by whom they were persecuted and despised. To Wesley and Whitfield belongs the honour of having been the first to enter fully upon this neglected field; and from their times we trace the growth, both within and without the pale of the Establishment, of a steady attempt to bring the working classes under the influence of the gospel. The success of their labours roused and stimulated every section of the Christian church. About seventy years ago the Sabbath School Institute was founded, and this was but the commencement of a series of efforts for diffusing the gospel at home and abroad, which have rendered the close of the last century and the beginning of the present a truly illustrious era in the annals of our common faith. From this period dates the origin of missions both foreign and domestic. At the beginning of the present century, the Bible and Tract Societies were formed, through whose combined operations more is now being done to evangelize the masses than at any former period. Religion at length has

come to the rescue ; but how slow have been her movements, and how inadequate are the resources she has yet embarked in the enterprise for its successful completion!

These motives springing from the past period of our history are enforced by considerations peculiar to the present. In whatever light we regard the working classes, they are the very pith and sinews of our national strength, one of the factors of an accumulation of wealth which turns the hoardings of a Cræsus into poverty, the foundation on which is reared that fabric of prosperity which is at once the admiration and envy of other nations. But for them capital would exist in vain, mechanical contrivances would be useless, and with our present resources we should be no richer than less favoured portions of mankind. A bountiful Providence has formed our land to be the abode of wealth, has indented its coasts with deep and spacious harbours, intersected it with navigable streams, made it fruitful in all the necessities of life, and hidden beneath its surface an inexhaustible supply of mineral treasures ; but what would these advantages avail us if we had been denied the only instrument which can make the richest natural resources of any value, an ingenious, enterprising and industrious people ?

We need only glance at history to ascertain how large a share has been taken by the working classes in producing the comparatively illustrious present. There was a time when the freedom we now enjoy lay hid in ancient usages and musty laws ; a great event had changed our institutions, imposed upon us the rigours of a feudal system, and threatened us with a long night of despotic power. In neighbouring nations the gift of liberty was

lost, to be recovered only in our own times by deeds of violence, which would outweigh the value of anything less precious ; here the mutual struggles of kings and barons seldom ended in the mere consolidation of private power ; the influence of a third estate, upon which both were equally dependent, insensibly swayed them to a higher end. It was the lower classes, fired with the nobility of Saxon blood, and daily working themselves up to fresh influence in the state, that gave those struggles a patriotic cast, and kept them true as the pole-star to the cause of freedom. The prize they helped to win they have been always ready to maintain. They were marshalled at Runnymede, they flocked to the camp at Tilbury, and in the most recent case of threatened invasion, none were more eager to defend, if needful with their lives, the independence of their native land. Wherever we turn we are struck with the monuments of their industry and skill ; under their hands the aspect of the country has been entirely changed ; marshes have been drained, forests hewn down, extensive districts of barren moorland inclosed, which are now covered with luxuriant pasturage or golden grain. As to those noble erections of the middle ages, on which our architectural pretensions chiefly rest,—something more than the genius of a Wykeham was required to place them there ; we see in them the patient toil of multitudes “unknown to fame,” whose dust has reposed for centuries beneath the shadow of the mighty fabrics which, when living, they helped to rear. To the working classes science is largely indebted for her latest achievements. Our highways, our canals and railroads are the fruit of labour ; our reservoirs, aqueducts and

tubular bridges owe their existence to the united strength of a thousand rough-worn hands. These brought the iron from the mine, the wood from the forest, and the stone from the quarry, and fashioned them into the gigantic and solid proportions at which the spectator gazes in silent awe. Genius would be nothing without labour ; without labour its most felicitous conceptions would be so many splendid dreams. Watt and Stephenson might as well have died in their cradles had they been denied the physical strength and daring which were required to carry out their inventions. The naval greatness, the commerce, and the wealth of Britain depend upon her manufactures, and these again upon the industrial energies of the people. We are naturalized by our manufactures in every clime, they make us truly the citizens of the world ; but every article of our enormous exports is the produce of labour. Shut up our workshops, let our population grow less industrious or less skilful, and our navy would soon be rotting in our harbours, and the fabric of British greatness would melt away like a snow-tower in the sun.

If from the past and the present we turn to survey the future, how many beneficial results do we observe springing from the elevation of the working classes ! Let us contemplate the chief of those which bear upon the temporal welfare of the community.

Among the immediate results of the elevation of the working classes would be *a vast extension of the demand for labour*. Scarcity of work is the great want of the times ; it is this which forces the working classes into such close competition with each other, and brings wages

down to so low a point that they will scarcely maintain existence. It is this which peoples our towns and villages with crowds of loiterers, whose emaciated and anxious countenances bear them witness that they are willing to work if only they could procure employment. It is this that originates the sad necessity, under the pressure of which hundreds of thousands every year forsake their native land for a distant shore, and which has recently enlisted the benevolent energies of society in carrying out a scheme of wholesale emigration. Various reasons have been assigned for the existence of this evil, the laws of God and the genius of man have both been impugned by turns. It is said that the people multiply faster than provision can be made for their subsistence; as though population were not a source of wealth, and it were not a libel on the goodness of the Creator to suppose that an individual can be brought into being who is not able by the utmost aid of his faculties to keep himself from starvation. Machinery is quarrelled with, one-half of the working classes would destroy every vestige of it to-morrow if they were withheld from such a course by nothing but a faith in its utility; as if ignorance and imbecility were the necessary conditions of human progress, and the advance of the mind in the career of its dominion over matter, could end only in making the individual wretched. If we are indeed shut up to such conclusions, the prospects of mankind are dreary enough; we must conclude that irreconcilable enmity exists between their highest interests, and that the development of their mental greatness is the path to misery. Surely it becomes us to look well about us before resigning ourselves to such

hopelessness. Rather should we expect to find some radical defect in our own conduct, than lightly believe that such contradictions can exist in nature, or that the Divine administration can be justly chargeable with such a want of benevolence or foresight.

It is quite true that something more than mental development is needed to make the world happy. The widest generalization in other departments of inquiry would lead us to expect that intellectual power might work harm to social interests if divorced from moral principle. The creations of genius must go hand in hand with that benevolence which is the handmaid of Christian piety, if they are to produce those natural fruits which constitute the sum of physical well-being. This must be admitted, and deserves to be seriously pondered; but we are not obliged to denounce machinery in order to account for the fact that thousands are out of employ. Instead of asking why the supply of labour is so large, suppose we ask why the demand for labour is so small. Instead of repining that so much labour is brought into the market, let attention be directed more frequently to the question, Why is so little labour wanted? Excluding all reference to foreign markets, is the home market carried to its furthest limits? Are the working classes fully supplied with all the comforts of life? Is convenience a drug in the houses of the poor? Survey the working man from head to foot; is he clad as respectably as he might be? has he exchanged his rags for fustian, or his fustian for broad-cloth? are his children more than just redeemed from nakedness? is his wife possessed of such attire as she deems befitting the sanctity of the sabbath, or the

self-respect of a woman? Accompanying him to his abode, does it contain the necessary accessories of a civilized life; can we discover in it plentiful traces of the cabinet-maker and the artist; or should we feel obliged, if guided by external evidence alone, to refer the furnishing of his dwelling to a period before clocks were invented, or mankind had learned the convenience of such things as tables and chairs? We cannot doubt that if the homes of our working men were furnished as they might, and as they ought to be, our home trade would be increased to three or four times its present amount. We should want, in order to supply them, three or four times the present number of employers, and three or four times the present number of workmen. Nor would this extra amount of employment be monopolized by one or two branches of business; on the contrary, it would be diffused through every trade in exact proportion to the importance of its bearing upon the comforts and conveniences of life. The cotton-spinners and calico-printers of the north, the clothiers of the west, the manufacturers of hosiery, hats, gloves, laces, ribbons; the builder, the joiner, the tailor; the maker of shoes, watches, cutlery, mechanical instruments and books,—all would rejoice together; plenty of work would be offered to all, and abundance of employment, springing from no unjust or ephemeral source, would guarantee the continuance of high wages.

In order to produce this result, to increase the demands of the home market three or four-fold, we have only to elevate the working man. His elevation is just synonymous with the increase of his wants and of his means of supplying them. Make him industrious,

sober, and economical, and the work is done. If the money which is now spent wastefully were expended in the purchase of really useful articles, what a multitude of factories would be set in motion! Let thirty millions annually, instead of being laid out in buying intoxicating drinks, be turned into the channels of productive trade, and how many thousands would it rescue from the streets, and raise to an honest and comfortable living! Every thrifty individual adds to the available resources of the country; he increases the amount of capital which can be applied to the purposes of trade; his fifty pounds, deposited in the bank or elsewhere, is not idle, the interest it pays him is only an index to the good it has conferred upon others. He has not employed a workman himself, but one has been employed for him. The holders of his money will put it in motion; either through agriculture, merchandise, or manufactures, or in influencing the general value of money, it will find its way into active life, and issue in the increased demand for labour. Thus the physical prosperity of the working man, if based on principle, is self-protective; economy and well-regulated expenditure lead to high wages, high wages increase the amount of money which can be returned to the channels of trade, and this tends to create such an additional demand for labour as guarantees the permanency of high wages. Let but the working man reform himself, avoid the ale-house, buy judiciously, and save carefully, and he will do more towards extending employment than all those who merely theorize on the rights of labour. The same causes which increase our home market will tend also to increase the demands of foreigners. In proportion

as our working classes become elevated will their wants become more numerous and varied. Comforts will rank as necessities, and luxuries as comforts. The less money they expend on intoxicating liquors, the more will they have to spend in the purchase of tea, sugar, and other articles of foreign produce; an increased consumption of home-made articles will increase our trade with those portions of the earth which supply the raw material; we shall become larger purchasers of silks, cotton, timber, hides, and such commodities, and thus be able to dispose of a larger quantity of our own manufactures. Besides, as the intelligence of the people advances, we shall become more enterprising and more pacific. Abundance of capital at home will open for itself channels of useful employment abroad, connecting us thus, by the bonds of mutual profit, with all nations. Instead of that defiant posture we have often unnecessarily assumed, we shall learn to eschew war except as the last resource of threatened freedom, and thus win for ourselves friendly cooperation on the part of those who have hitherto fought against us with exclusive treaties and hostile tariffs. Thus does private virtue end in public good; thus, by promoting the moral elevation of the people, do we take the surest way to surround ourselves with the blessings of physical prosperity.

Not only the demand for labour would be affected by the elevation of the working classes, *an equally favourable influence would be exerted on the quality of the supply.* The manufacturer needs not to be informed of the close connexion which subsists between an intelligent and industrious operative class, and the production

of goods at such a rate of quality and cheapness as will enable him successfully to compete with foreign nations. It is evidently for the advantage of the former that the latter be skilful and inventive, that they keep punctually the hours of business, apply themselves diligently while at work, have no temptation to wander off in search of other masters, and especially that they should be able fairly and dispassionately to appreciate the important questions which are continually arising between the employer and the employed. The excellence of manufactured articles can never rise above the skill of the workman, and the average capacity of our operative population for any species of manufacture, fixes the limit to which we can advance in that direction. In nothing are we more deficient, when compared with other nations, than in the faculty of artistic conception and inventiveness of design. We have hitherto been distinguished for the strength and quantity, rather than the fineness and beauty of our produce ; the palm of muscular energy, of enterprise, and scientific skill is ours, but in point of design we are debtors to the inventive genius of our neighbours. But why be inferior to them in any respect ? The toleration of inferiority in any species of manufacture must be seriously detrimental to our trading position, and should only be submitted to when, from physical causes, improvement is plainly impossible.

In all these respects the elevation of the working classes must have a highly favourable influence on the supply of labour. The increase of their knowledge and the culture of their conceptive powers will have a beneficial effect upon their taste and inventive skill.

Acquainted with a wider range of ideas, accustomed to decompose and form them into new combinations, and familiar with those specimens of art in which the images of beauty which are present to the human mind have been most felicitously embodied, they will no longer rest satisfied with garbled imitations, or with their previous tame or extravagant performances; they will be ambitious to create for themselves, under the guidance of severe simplicity and graceful freedom. In the manual branches of labour a corresponding improvement will take place; their mental faculties awakened, conversant with the principles as well as the rules of their employments, they will cease to be mere machines, unable to depart a hair's-breadth from their technical instructions. Freedom from degrading vices and the possession of outward comforts will endear labour to the working man, he will be inspired thereby with a sense of its true nobility. Viewing it in connexion with its reward, independence and a happy home, he will pursue it with greater cheerfulness, doing it more heartily, and more conscientiously alive to the interests of his employer. Such a man will feel the value of labour, and will not willingly spend an idle hour; he will have no weekly drinking days, no half sober seasons, when men do no more work than they are obliged to do; he will indulge in no fickle changes, assume no airs when his employer is in straits; intelligence and moral worth will elevate the relation subsisting between them; it will become softer, more genial, the channel of mutual courtesies, a golden instead of an iron chain, equally strong, but more costly, beautiful, and lasting.

The interests of literature and science would share extensively in the benefits resulting from the elevation of the working classes. One of the first consequences of the attainment of that object would be an indefinite multiplication of the class of readers. For every individual who now finds pleasure in perusing the works of our best authors we should then find ten. This would proportionably extend the trade of the publisher, increase his profits, enable him to repay literary labour on a more liberal scale, and thus induce a larger number of educated men to devote themselves to the intellectual wants of the people. To what causes are we to ascribe the comparative cheapness of books, and the vast variety of useful publications of the present day? The steps which preceded the publication of a volume fifty years ago would now be thought ridiculously solemn, while the price for which it sold would startle the economical sensibilities of modern readers. This change is owing chiefly to the spread of intelligence, which by enlarging the demand of the book market, has enabled the publisher to offer the same article at a greatly diminished price. "People's Editions" were a novelty in the last century, the standard works of our historians and poets were then quite above the reach of the working man, they were looked upon as commodities which it was not possible for him to want; the capitalist would as soon have thought of speculating on his behalf in a cargo of precious stones, as of placing within his reach the highest productions of human genius. There was then scarcely any periodical literature, no "Edinburgh" and "People's" Journals, no "Family Economists" and "Working Man's Friends;"

none of those gigantic weekly missives which make the giving of news the apology for furnishing us with information on all subjects. There were then no "Weekly Volumes," no "Standard Libraries," no "Monthly Publications," no "Penny Encyclopædias." Foreign authors were then thought to be the peculiar heritage of the learned, no cheap translations brought the matchless productions of ancient genius to the working man's fireside, and rendered Sophocles and Plato the denizens of an English cottage. These advantages have been the produce of late years, they result from the additional thousands who are willing to purchase books, and an extension of the cause would issue in a multiplication of its desirable effects. Extend the demand for books and they will become still cheaper. At the present moment, several noble schemes are kept in abeyance by the apprehension that the works in question would not circulate sufficiently to defray their cost; remove this apprehension, and forth those books will go to do their part in refining the national mind. The increase of knowledge will tend also to raise the moral tone of our popular literature. Strengthen the intellect, and it will relish healthy food; engage the services of a higher class of writers, and the panderer to sensuality will be driven from the field. Such changes would exert a beneficial influence upon the highest departments of literary effort; the admission of fourteen millions of the working classes within the temple of the Muses, would render the effusions of those mystic beings more truthful, rational, and intelligible, without any injury to the higher element by which they are said to be distinguished.

In a way still more congenial to sympathies of literature and science may their interest be promoted by the elevation of the working man. Genius has sometimes blossomed in humble life ; the artisan has become, through his ingenious mechanisms, a nation's benefactor ; the ploughboy has won a poetic wreath from the hand of Fame. These developments have taken place under favouring circumstances, but it is quite impossible to say how much more numerous they might have been had the requisite conditions been more generally supplied. Great geniuses, we know, are rare, and in those which have engaged the attention of the world there was a prodigious force of mind which would seem to have guaranteed their success under any circumstances ; but of how much that is sweet and ennobling, to say no more, may we have been deprived because a great and pregnant soul was unable to articulate its thoughts ! At least, how vastly more refined and picturesque might have been our common working life, if education had developed and taught the people to express those ideas and emotions which are the common poetic possession of the human mind. The greatest discoveries of science are based on facts, the generalizations of the observant and inquiring intellect precede the course of the steam-engine, and mark out the path of the electric fluid. Earth and heaven are still full of mysteries ; rain, dew, meteors, and the habits of insect life, on these and similar subjects we are ignorant, because we have no facts to warrant our conclusions. We want more observant eyes, we want the contact of intelligence with the countless phenomena which are daily happening around ;

let this be given, and science will resume her march. Elevate the working classes, and we multiply indefinitely the intelligent investigators of nature, and the probabilities of discovering hitherto hidden truths. We have not yet reached the limit of useful mechanical inventions. We could make hands of iron do much of the drudgery which is now performed by man. In many trades, time could be saved and the article rendered both better and cheaper by the adoption of some simple contrivance. Discoveries of this sort are not made by scientific investigations, they are the product of a happy thought, the offspring of a perceived difficulty, brooded over by the skill and fancy of an ingenious mind. Elevate the working classes, make them thinkers, initiate them into the principles of mechanical science, inspire them with right views of the vocation of labour, and the age of discovery through which we have passed may prove only the brilliant dawning of a day of inconceivable splendour.

Results of a still higher order, springing from the elevation of the working classes, are those which would issue in the improved health and morals of the community. It is a startling fact, that the physical condition of a large portion of the population is totally opposed to the demands of health. In many of the poorer districts of large towns, so complete are the arrangements which exist for the production of disease, that imagination might easily regard them as a demoniac agency for shortening human life. Devoutly recognising the hand of God in the dreadful pestilence which has recently visited our shores, it nevertheless becomes us to acknowledge that the causes from which it sprang

were to a great extent the offspring of a criminal violation of His natural laws. Impurities had been allowed to accumulate and fester beneath our eyes ; filth, forbidden to appear in the public streets, had been allowed to skulk unheeded among the haunts of poverty ; intent on the pursuit of gain, or dazzled with magnificent schemes of benevolence, we had forgotten the first duties of citizenship, the simple claims of justice ; and the plague was sent as a warning voice from heaven to rebuke our folly. The cholera is only an occasional visitant, but there are other diseases, springing from the same conditions, and equally destructive, which have become naturalized amongst us. Pitable, indeed, is the mortality of children in large towns ; sad to think that in some of them, in Liverpool for example, about one-half of the entire population die before completing their fifth year. Many districts are never free from fever ; month after month it pursues its silent course unnoticed, because familiar. Every year it takes a firmer hold, and exerts a wider sway. From the poor man's cottage it passes to the abodes of wealth, growing at every step more impartial in the selection of its victims. Suddenly a house is wrapt in mourning, halls which lately resounded with the joyous prattlings of childhood, are silent and desolate ; in the budding promise of youth a parent's hopes have been blighted, and for thousands the world which lately bloomed with beauty, has been changed to a gloomy pathway to the tomb. Hecatomb after hecatomb of human sacrifices is offered to the King of Terrors, man all the while unmindful of the fact that Providence, by these visitations, invites him to unregarded lessons, and rebukes

him for making light of its unchanging laws. Let society recognise its duties, avail itself of the discoveries of science, diffuse around the homely gifts of water, light and air, drain every street and alley, forbid the tenancy of cellars, and remind every district, by the presence of public baths, that cleanliness is a social duty, and experience warrants the hope that the rate of mortality will soon diminish. It is proved by incontestable facts, that progress in the elements of physical well-being is invariably followed by a prolongation of human life.

Health and morality are very closely allied; the causes which are detrimental to the one are seldom favourable to the other. The same improvements in the condition of the people which lessen their liability to disease, will also help them to the attainment of purer morals. Greater privacy at home will foster greater refinement of feeling, and this will show itself in the better maintenance of outward decency. Whatever is repugnant to good taste, whatever tends to break down those barriers of mutual respect with which nature has environed man, or shocks the unsophisticated sensibilities of woman, will be instinctively eschewed, and the practice of it be regarded as a badge of infinite shame. Nor would this be a trivial attainment; vulgarity and rudeness are always the pioneers of vice. Elevate the people, and there will be fewer temptations to the alehouse; they will loathe the buffoonery of the tap-room, and scorn the idiotic professions of universal friendship or universal war which sit upon the drunkard's lip. Our young men will no longer spend their time in filthy conversation, hanging indolently at

the corners of the streets, as if they were lying in wait for sin ; they will repair to the reading-room, the lecture, or their own home, rendered attractive now by the denizenship of appreciated genius, the treasured productions of illustrious men ; or they will walk abroad to contemplate the beauties of creation, and joyfully recognise the marks of infinite power and wisdom which it displays. For this generation the saloon and the theatre will have no charms. Ideas will have got the better of sense. Accustomed to the contemplation of life and nature, as they are mirrored forth in the human mind, with the faultless appendages of fancy, they will look with disgust upon the barbarous mimicry of the stage, its forceful passions, its mechanisms of rain and thunder, its trap-doors, and tinsel royalties. The mind, enlightened and accustomed to reflect, will be sober even in its amusements, and carry into its very pleasures a sense of those spiritualities with which it can never be dissociated. Through the medium of such changes, the elevation of the working classes will not be a hidden fact ; its radiant proof will be presented to every eye ; the atmosphere of life will be purer ; in speech, manners, employment, aims, in all the manifold phases of human existence, man will seem to be invested with a higher dignity.

The elevation of the working classes will tend to nothing so much as *to produce among them a larger stock of public virtue, to fire them with a spirit of patriotism and the love of order.* These are not the times for lightly dispensing with such sentiments ; they are the natural safeguards of society against lawless force, whether directed against it from without, or

traitorously roused within its own bosom. That commonwealth has just cause for alarm which is not sustained by the warm attachment of the great majority of those who compose it. But patriotism is not a mere instinct, it is a reasonable sentiment, and is capable of a rational vindication. It is fed by the possession of sterling benefits ; it springs from the consciousness of being an appreciable part of the social whole, of counting for something in the history and actions of the country. A slave has no home, no fatherland, no honoured soil ; he can never rise to the dignity of the patriot ; but how much better than a slave is he who is bound to his country chiefly by the tie of taxation, whose home is a scene of abject wretchedness, who has no patrimony, not an inch of soil he can call his own, whose present existence is a miserable shift from one difficulty to another, and whose future is abandoned to hopes never to be realized, or to grim despair ? Of what meaning to such a man is the old patriot resolve to die for "hearth and altar," since he knows nothing about the one, and is morally incapacitated for caring about the other ? A state requires the support of all its sons ; they are its true pillars, and the absence of one is so much weakness. All cannot guide and rule ; to reach the pinnacles of power must be the fortune, not greatly to be envied, of a few ; but every heart should be loyal to it ; a sentiment of profound attachment should inspire the humblest individual who is governed by its laws. A healthy nationality should circulate through every bosom, in itself the fruit of justice and the pledge of progress. Elevate the people, and this object will be gained ; their country will soon

become dearer to their hearts. Assist them to throw off the burden of vicious habits ; cheer them on in their attempt to become more virtuous and more intelligent ; stretch out the helping hand to struggling resolve ; let the man who deems himself better than his neighbours, instead of standing aloof from them on that account, hail them with so much greater cordiality, seeking, by the force of a hearty, but discriminating friendship, to raise them to a level with himself ; let the poor man feel that there is a national heart which beats in sympathy with his own, that his country cares for him, and is willing to forego a portion of its wealth to promote his welfare, then will he rejoice in his country, and the throne will boast a firmer allegiance nowhere than among the cottage homes of Britain.

The elevation of the working classes, in kindling the fire of patriotism, would consume those jealousies which have been so sadly detrimental to our social interests. Surround them with social comforts, give them a happy fireside, ennoble them with the truths of religion, and they will cease to look with envy upon the ampler possessions of others. Such a change will have the effect of giving them broader and juster views, of stripping rank and wealth of the quality of supreme value with which our fancy is so apt to clothe them, of postponing the idea of absolute perfection to another life, where the inequalities of the present will be seen to have been regulated by a wise and tender regard to our highest welfare ; of awakening thankfulness for laws which secure to every man his own, throwing the shield of their protection equally around the wealthy and the poor, and of enabling them, should anything, to a political eye,

require a juster balance, to distinguish between persons and systems ; and while perchance they oppose the latter, to cherish the kindest sentiments towards the former. False impressions and ungenerous prejudices have not been confined to one side only ; too often the worst suspicions have been entertained in higher quarters respecting the ranks beneath. Reasoning from a few instances, it has been thought that nothing but fierceness and brutality, merged in the most mischievous designs, could possibly dwell among the humbler sections of the people. Alas, that circumstances should ever have created a liability to such errors ! Let all parties understand each other. Perish every thought which would perpetuate this alienation ! The working classes are gentle, generous, accessible to noble sentiments, loyal, forgiving, worthy, and capable of the highest friendship. Nothing but ignorance and blind selfishness can prevent all classes from laying aside all differences, extinguishing every cause of enmity, and merging themselves into one united and prosperous people.

Surveying the progress of events in this country during the last twenty-five years, especially in connexion with those which, during the same period, have occurred upon the continent of Europe, it is impossible to resist the conviction that the working classes will eventually attain a larger share of political power than they now enjoy. Whether such a change is desirable or not makes no difference to the probability which is shadowed forth. Within a comparatively short period the constituencies of the country will probably be so modified as to place increased political power in the hands of the masses. The decisions of the House of Commons will in that

case become a reflection of the popular mind ; the settled principles of which, both in its likes and dislikes, will thenceforth pass into law. This change is contemplated by many with the greatest dread, and by others with sanguine hopes : both should seek to be prepared for coming events.

The way to prevent the possible occurrence of apprehended evils is, to proceed with all diligence in the path of social improvement. No danger need be feared from the fullest exercise of political power by a people truly enlightened in their own interests, and pervaded with the spirit of religion. If we suffer the swarming population of our large towns to grow up without instruction, if popular evils are permitted to go on uncorrected, if the growing infidelity of the people is left without its proper counteractive in the spread of scriptural knowledge, if an ungodly press is allowed to monopolize all access to the popular mind, if the missionaries of socialism are left to insinuate at leisure their sugared fallacies, without any effort being made by the more enlightened portions of the community to expose them ; then indeed we shall have much to fear from any increase of popular power within the halls of legislature, and the gloomiest predictions of the anxious patriot may fall short of the actual fulfilment. But if, on the other hand, the present season is devoted to united and vigorous exertions in endeavouring to improve the condition of the working classes, if every agency which can be devised is put into operation to elevate their social position and increase their domestic happiness, if the truths of religion are pressed upon them with all the persuasiveness which disinterested friendship can invent,

if in generously assisting and stimulating their personal exertions we give them in a few years a patrimony of their own to guard, an inheritance, the price of industry, to leave their children, then the complete ascendancy of the people will be the ascendancy of order, piety, and freedom; there will be no violent severance of the continuity of our national existence; the past will be honoured, the names of illustrious patriots and legislators will still be mentioned with admiration, and the light of great examples be transmitted with undimmed lustre to succeeding ages.

Such are a few of the benefits which would accrue to society from resolutely prosecuting the career on which Providence is now urging us to enter, the gifts which God has annexed to well-doing, the peaceful triumphs with which he will crown, in this life, united and honest endeavours to promote the welfare of man. It is lawful to reverse the picture, and to contemplate the loss of these benefits as the penalty imposed upon possible apathy and neglect. Assuredly unless all classes of the community arouse themselves to meet the social demands of the present crisis our national doom is sealed. The star of our greatness will set for ever, decay will rise higher and higher through the various grades of society, until, as with the waters of a second deluge, every vestige of wealth and splendour will perish beneath a flood of ruin. Our history will remain a pyramid of blasted glory, on which posterity will read, in fiery characters, the secret of our downfall, which will teach them that they "do justly and love mercy," that they aspire not to the empire of the world till they have rooted out the mischiefs which endanger their sovereignty

at home, and that the foundations of solid grandeur can only rest on the affections of an enlightened people. This *may* be the end to which the transition state through which we are passing will conduct us, but such a result can only happen if the warnings of Heaven are disregarded, and criminal supineness is preferred to generous effort. An energetic manifestation of sound principles would not only rescue us from the pressure of existing evils, but place in our hands the pledge of a career of prosperity.

Such are some of the motives which spring from the temporal condition of the community; let us glance for a moment at those which are furnished by religion. In surveying the considerations which ought to influence a Christian's mind, it is impossible to lose sight of those which flow from the example of Christ himself. One of the leading features of his character was sympathy with the common wants of man. His miracles were chiefly designed to prove the Divinity of his mission, and they would have answered this purpose as well if they had never been associated with works of mercy. He might have commanded the stars to stand still in their courses, dried up the waters of Jordan, or called down fire from heaven to consume his persecutors; but he preferred reaching the convictions of men by methods which would also win their hearts, and to guide the conduct in establishing the faith of his disciples. Hence "he went about doing good," choosing the objects of his goodness chiefly from those who could render him nothing in return. He preached so powerfully that the world has never forgotten his lessons, but he did not stop here; he

mitigated physical suffering, gave hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind, allowing not the grandeurs of eternity or communion with his heavenly Father to render him inaccessible to the ordinary calamities of man. Neither was the compassion of Christ confined within the circle of his immediate followers, nor circumscribed by the limits of a conventional piety. He sat at meat with "publicans and sinners," exhibiting thus that mixture of benevolence and forbearance which causes "the rain to fall and the sun to shine on the evil and on the good."

In addition to the obligations arising from Christ's example, there are those which spring from the doctrines of Christianity. The truths which were scattered among mankind by the Great Teacher, accompanied by a continuation of those influences which were poured forth on the day of Pentecost, have been winning in every age more and more of man's allegiance, gradually establishing a stronger and more spiritual influence over him, and diffusing a purer spirit through every department of social and political life. The Scriptures recognise this process, and light us on to its glorious consummation, when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," and the envious passions of man "shall neither hurt nor destroy in all his holy mountain." That such will be the final issue of Christianity we have the assurance of God himself; but how shall it be secured? By the consecrated energies of the church of Christ. Man is to act on man, the leaven of Christian truth is to be diffused by the aid of human sympathy; truth is to become articulate in the human voice, and be presented to the world

through the medium of an organization of believers. Human agency is made the absolute condition of success, and if it were possible for all the people of God to forget their solemn vows and sink into apathy, we should require a new revelation to inform us how mankind could be won.

The Christian church has not been altogether recreant to these obligations, she has recognised herself as constituted and charged to preach the gospel to the world; but this step, so far from relaxing the obligation to domestic effort, increases it by those motives which spring from consistency. Her missionaries have gone forth to distant lands, the ends of the earth have been made the theatre of her sympathies; she has desecrated the negro in chains, the Polynesian sharpening his weapons for savage war, the son of Africa rioting in the excesses of a loathsome superstition, the Hindoo bending his knees to venerable puerilities, or suffering his existence to be absorbed by pantheistic dreams, and she has sped forth on the wings of mercy to dissipate these evils. God forbid that a single prayer should be withheld, or a single shilling alienated from this holy cause; rather let the number of such offerings be augmented ten-fold; but still a larger amount of domestic effort is required to reconcile them with the claims of justice, or to exemplify their character as the fruits of a healthy piety. Assuming that the salvation of a given number of our countrymen is equal in value to that of any similar portion of the human race, the mere fact that they are nearest in local position gives them a prior claim. If a ministering angel were to descend upon a field of battle immediately after the carnage had subsided, would he

not pause at the first bleeding victim, and refuse to leave him, though a thousand others were dying in the distance, till he had moistened his lips, and closed his gaping wounds? True piety, like the sun, will diffuse the largest measure of light and warmth in its nearest neighbourhood, and will warm remoter regions only by proceeding through the intervening spaces. If there is nothing unjust or exaggerated in the efforts which are now being made to elevate the heathen abroad, what amount of anxiety ought we to evince for the heathen at home? If the distant parts of the field can consistently receive so large a share of attention, how much effort ought to be expended upon those immediately beneath our eye? If our piety is so powerful after having travelled ten thousand miles, and overcome ten thousand dangers by sea and land,—if it burns with such fervid lustre upon the distant plains of Africa and Hindostan, what must it be at home, what must it be if only to keep its character from suspicion? While the bulk of the working classes are strangers to religion, can we continue without misgiving to offer the rejected boon to other nations? If the irreligion which characterizes so large a proportion of our countrymen springs from any defect inherent in the gospel, how can we retain our confidence in its adaptation to elevate the moral condition of man? but if, as reflection must assure us, that evil arises from the inadequacy or imperfection of the means employed for its diffusion, ought we not to ask for Divine wisdom to remedy the defect, resolved upon proving the temper of our weapons in the comparatively secluded field of domestic warfare, before we venture forth to attempt the conquest of the world?

The elevation of the working classes would remove a reproach which infidelity has been eager to fix upon religion and its professors. What, the infidel triumphantly asks, has religion done for the masses? Look at their condition—how degraded! thousands divested of every relic of happiness and hope, the slaves of brutal vices; thousands more entered annually upon our calendars of crime; millions upon whom the gospel exerts no greater direct influence than upon the savages of central Africa. Is *time* required to effect a moral change? Religion has been established for ages. Is *learning* desirable to develop its evidences, or *talent* to enforce its claims? The erudition and talent of the choicest minds have been consecrated to its service. Are *zealous preachers* requisite for its diffusion? Twenty thousand men are set apart in this country to the sacred office. Is *the fostering patronage of royalty and wealth* necessary to give full scope to its energies? These advantages have been enjoyed. How is it that religion, possessed of every reasonable help, should have accomplished so little? Could it possibly have been so fruitless, if, as its professors avow, it sprang from God, and still enjoys the co-operation of His Spirit? But infidelity is capricious, and easily changes ground according to the intended nature of its attack. If religion is to be condemned in its essence, it is represented as being possessed of every collateral advantage, and as unsuccessful through its own impotence; if, on the other hand, it is to be assailed through its professors, they are represented as utterly wanting its spirit, a parcel of hypocritical pretenders. The latter attempt is more safe and popular than the former, and therefore

more frequently resorted to, though generally with the help of the most shameful partiality and exaggeration. The Christian church is represented as hostile to the interests of the people—as intrenched in an impregnable citadel of selfishness—as passing by on the other side, with the Levite, and thanking God that she is not as others, with the Pharisee. Such a representation is calumnious; the Christian, however imperfect, is more than a match for the infidel, and Christianity in its lowest manifestations is more benignant in its aspect than infidelity. What has infidelity done to assume this lofty vantage-ground? Where shall we find her deeds of love? What unknown services to mankind, what unseen development of her virtues, can suddenly have raised her from the position of a petty and rancorous rival, to that of an impartial censor? Her good actions, if she has performed any, are of yesterday, and have not yet been brought to the light. What impudence to presume upon their merits before the world has had time to note their existence! how largely must she calculate upon the credulousness of humanity!

A ready method exists, by which the cavils of infidelity may be silenced. Let the reproach of neglect and inefficiency be taken away by such a manifestation of Christian principle as shall, with the blessing of God, insure success. The utmost possible limits of what the church of Christ *can* do have never yet been reached, the most energetic efforts she has yet put forth have not tasked a tithe of her real strength. She has raised her finger, and multitudes have been won; what, then, shall be the stretching forth of her arm? Hitherto the

field of conflict has only been surveyed, and a few detached outposts assailed ; we can only conjecture what would ensue were the hosts of the Lord to present themselves with embattled front upon the plain. Armed with those weapons which have already proved mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, no evil, however inveterate, would long resist the attack. If the church of Christ is only true to itself and faithful to God, the working classes will soon be won. And what a reflex influence will every approximation towards this triumph exert upon its own aggressive power ! The impiety of the masses weakens the church. Hundreds upon whom favourable impressions have been produced, are suddenly hardened ; exposed to the influence of ungodly companions, their spiritual anxieties soon prove like the morning cloud and early dew. New converts, who were lately regarded with grateful hope, have been seduced from their professed allegiance to Christ, to swell again the ranks of impiety. The majority of professors of religion, exposed during six days in the week to the conversation of irreligious and sceptical associates, soon sink into indifference, and rest satisfied with a merely negative character. These influences are always at work ; but at times they become unusually pernicious. Under the direction of some sceptical agency, they are arrayed in deadly antagonism to the gospel, and by the vast number of apparent conversions to infidelity, spread temporary panic through every section of the church. True, such avowed opposition is soon silenced, but not till it has given a profitable *éclat* to the cause of unbelief, and confirmed the incipient scepticism of thousands. Let

the church of Christ "lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes" among our home population, and what additional vigour would be infused into all the movements of piety ! How many who are now the objects of missionary labour, would themselves become missionaries ! What augmented contributions would flow into the Christian treasury from the willing hearts of our operative millions ! Upon what a broad foundation would the fabric of Christian effort repose ; and with how much greater hopes might we look for the renovation of the world !

But while extraneous motives may be of use in rousing us to practical effort, it must not be concealed that in proportion as our piety becomes more vigorous will there be the less necessity for urging them. Christianity, as realized in the heart, is a principle of benevolence which by its own simple and independent force should be sufficient for enlisting us in opposition to every evil which oppresses our fellow-men. This principle is widely generic ; it is applicable to all the forms of misery which haunt the world ; evil as evil is the antagonist with which it wrestles. In this holy war it is accessible to no false tenderness, and appalled by no prospective terrors, but fearlessly points its lance against everything which is opposed to God, and therefore hostile to the interests of man. Evil is various in its manifestations, but its essence is indivisible. It is sin, the alienation of the heart from God, which has filled the earth with mourning, and it is against this that the Christian is bound to wage uncompromising war. This obligation is identical with his Christianity. He is associated with one who came into the world in order

“to put away sin.” “For this cause the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The object practically involved in this obligation commends itself to the strongest sympathies of the renewed mind. Divine forgiveness alone can effectually break the dominion of sin within us. A sense of pardon through the atoning sacrifice of Christ alone can supply influences sufficiently strong and subtle to effect a moral renovation. Hence love is the conqueror of sin; Divine mercy, as exercised through the cross, the world’s regenerator; and the simple act of leading men to Christ, the richest of all blessings.

Behold, Christian, what ought to be the ruling object of your life. It is to lead your fellow-men to Him who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” He has placed you for this purpose in the sphere you occupy. Whatever the character of your position, however elevated or however lowly; whether situated amidst the daily bustle of thousands, or in the most sequestered solitude; whether you fill the relation of master or servant; whether you are affluent or needy; your lot has been distinctly fixed by the Head of the church, with a view to your usefulness in his service. Your duty is of the most exalted kind. Others confine their efforts to the removal of secondary evils; you aim at extinguishing the one great seminal curse of sin: others confine themselves to the cultivation of particular virtues; you seek to resuscitate the whole of man’s spiritual nature, and to adorn it with all things whatsoever which are “lovely and of good report:” others place the goal of their endeavours no further than the uttermost verge of time; you carry it forward till imagination loses it

in the depths of eternity. Mankind are for the most part strangers to solid happiness, the victims of guilt, and the slaves of sin; you aspire to lead them to the fountain of living waters, to tell them of Him who "died the just for the unjust," and to make them acquainted with that Spirit of holiness through whose energy we are quickened from "dead works to serve the living God." Thus your mission is one of the loftiest benevolence; it is the most compendious method of doing good. In the prosecution of this work ten thousand motives press upon you; but there is one which, in power and comprehensiveness, includes them all. The apostle ascends to the summit of Christian duty when he exclaims, "The love of Christ constraineth us!" At this height duty is softened into privilege, and the rugged bands of obligation melt into the gentle but omnipotent impulses of cheerful willingness. Before the spectacle of self-devotion which Calvary exhibits, selfishness expires. At the voice of a crucified Redeemer who, touched with infinite compassion, laid aside the robes of glory, and tasted for us the bitterness of death, what bosom does not swell with gratitude? What heart can refuse the consecration of its best energies and affections to the furtherance of that object which drew him from the skies?

The motives which have been urged thus far belong to the present life; there are others which belong to that period of our existence which will only commence with the end of the present economy. That God will then most surely reward those who shall have been found faithful in their stewardship, is a truth which revelation places beyond all question. When, indeed,

we think of the evils which in every age the witnesses for righteousness have had to endure, we feel the benevolence of those promises, whether written in the language of hope upon the heart, or beaming from the pages of the inspired word, which supported them in tortures and death by the hope of final triumph. Those heroic confessors who in our own land resisted papal superstition, those whose bones have long since rotted in their native Alpine valleys, and they who earlier still were thrown to lions in the Roman amphitheatre, how could they have dared the conflict with sovereign wickedness if there had been no firm assurance of a better time both for the world and for themselves? The Christian martyr, otherwise overwhelmed with a sense of absolute evil, took refuge in the thought that he had cast his bread upon the waters, that he had scattered the incorruptible seed in the rugged soil, and that at some future day it would bring forth a glorious harvest. His soul, superior to time, hovered over the world's brief history, and saw, towards its close, a brilliant sunset, when the errors of mankind would be cleared away, and eternal principles, awhile discarded, again resume their reign—when, ennobled with the blessings of reconciliation and repentance for the failings of the past, the world would gratefully hail for its guiding star the truths for which they then suffered and bled.

The character of this contest is changed, but the contest itself is still going on. The continuance of the struggle during eighteen centuries has confronted the church of Christ with different foes, but the struggle is still the same ; ignorance, selfishness, and superstition,

arrayed in a different garb, are still the principles with which love and truth contend. Constancy and self-sacrifice were never more requisite in the Christian professor, and never were they subjected to more trying tests. Satan now plays his part by persuasion rather than by force, tempts with wealth, and ease, and worldly reputation, instead of terrifying with the prison and the stake. If at all faithful to our trust, we have a fellowship with the sufferings and the responsibilities of our brethren of other ages, and are also entitled to appropriate to ourselves the consolations by which they were sustained. Every department of Christian effort is a section of the same great scheme ; a scheme which takes its place among the highest purposes of Providence, which is the offspring of redeeming love, and for the success of which we have the oath of God. The evils which oppress the world are the product of ignorance and sin, the fruit of that bondage of corruption into which the fall has thrown mankind ; full deliverance from them is the redemption for which the whole creation longs, and the point towards which every pious act incessantly tends. In this work not a tear is shed in vain ; not a prayer is wafted to heaven in vain ; no effort, however obscurely exerted, is suffered to abide without its fruit. A hidden link connects every sacrifice with its glorious issue. As surely as the morning succeeds to night, as surely as the sheaves of autumn follow the rains of spring and the rays of summer, so surely " he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The world's progress cannot fail ; God, by the agency of man, secures its per-

manency. All things join invisibly to aid it; treachery, discord, the violence of human passions, revolutions, silent reactions, avowed opposition, all are the secret springs by which it continually moves forward. All who oppose it, or stand aloof from it, will be crushed by its advancing forces; all who identify themselves with it are sure of a final triumph.

The immortality of our nature enables us to turn the most distant prospects into present motives. Assured that the hopes inspired by philanthropy and religion will some day be fulfilled, we can also rest assured that we shall behold their fulfilment. It cannot be that while our existence shall continue, all the links of sympathy which connect us with this world will be severed. Wherever our home may be when we close our earthly sojourn, memory and hope, ineradicable forces of the soul, will bind us indissolubly to its past and future destinies. We shall be no strangers to it when withdrawn from its actual scenes, our citizenship will be held in reserve to give us a share in the transactions which will distinguish the great gathering-day of the human race. God will then give with his own hand the finishing stroke of retribution, give a welcome to those who in this life worked for him, a public recognition of the cause which they espoused, a justification of their hopes, their labours, their tears, their sufferings, and their blood. Then shall the efforts and sacrifices of good men be brought out of their obscurity, cleansed from every imperfection, and emblazoned in the purified splendour of those principles which produced them. The sigh which never smote the ear of man, and the tear which never moved his sympathy, humbly offered

at the shrine of truth, shall then be rewarded with ineffable joys. That unobtrusive philanthropy which chose as the scene of its labours the abodes of poverty and sickness, which strove, neglected or unknown, to enlighten ignorance, rebuke impiety, and lead the thoughts of men to their Creator, shall then be deemed a title to the highest honours. Not even in this life shall the names of good men be forgotten. The clouds of obloquy which have hitherto obscured them will pass away ; in the better age which is rapidly dawning there will be a resurrection of everything which has been truly great in history. The world is beginning to discern its true friends and its genuine heroes ; fame is laying the foundations of a new temple in the hearts of regenerated men ; and while parchments and marbles are fast decaying under the moth and tooth of time, spiritual trophies are preparing to grace its walls, which will shine with increasing lustre throughout eternity.

By how many motives is the Christian urged to consecrate himself to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the masses of the people, how many incitements beam upon him from every quarter to attempt their rescue from the shackles of ignorance and vice ! The Saviour's example, the obligations which spring from speculative and practical consistency, the assurance that such conduct would silence the cavils of irreligion and increase the aggressive resources of the church of Christ, and the encouragements afforded by the prospect of futurity. Such motives seem to preclude the possibility of inaction ; when every doctrine and precept of religion is vocal with inducements to effort, how can piety refuse to buckle on the armour ? The sphere of effort which the

church of Christ is invited to enter should be made her own. She should seek the largest extent of doing good which a spirit of disinterested sacrifice can secure. A shame and pity will it be if with so many additional motives the world is suffered to eclipse her, and considerations of expediency prove a more effectual stimulus to self-devotedness than the workings of Christian love. The masses cannot remain stationary. If not quickly raised they will sink lower. They cannot be raised without religion; every other remedy will prove a mere palliative and not a cure. Religion can only be spread by those who know and value it. Let the *church of Christ* take up the work; she has power amazing power, let it be wielded with a vigorous arm, and the work is done. Let a new crusade be proclaimed, inspired by principle and not by fanaticism; a crusade of knowledge against ignorance, of truth against error, of piety against irreligion, of all the elements of social happiness and order against wretchedness, degradation, and ruin; a crusade to which the voice of God emphatically summons us, just, beneficent, and infallibly certain of success. *Christian employers!* address yourselves to the work; thousands look up to you for guidance; what power is there in a master's word when kindly spoken! how many opportunities of promoting the welfare of your work-people are offered exclusively to you! Their personal condition during the hours of labour, the state of their homes, their personal character and habits,—how much might be done for their improvement in these respects without trenching upon the most sensitive independence! *Christian women!* the task is yours; work, as in a sacred vocation, for the elevation of your own sex; make friend-

ships in those cottage-homes where your presence would be hailed as that of a ministering angel. You can venture everywhere; the tenderness of your nature clothes you in the safest panoply, the furious passions of man grow calmer in your presence, and vice itself is never more anxious to borrow for a while the garb of virtue than when beheld by woman. Go, it is your mission, into the haunts of wretchedness, stand by the bed of sickness, discourse the heart to penitence, guide its relenting anxieties to the only Saviour, and cheer the hitherto desolate abode with the holy light of Christian love. Such efforts will be repaid in gratitude's costliest coin, and by the consciousness that you are helping to raise to a higher status of domestic worth a neglected section of the noble sisterhood of Britain. *Young men!* the work is preeminently yours. Acquire knowledge that you may impart it; let each make himself companions in piety; gather round you the children of the poor, instruct them, watch over them, unfold to them the nature and requirements of Christianity, seek by conversation and prayer to instil into their mind the spiritual essence of religion, and enlist them as they rise to manhood in the same divine employ. *Ministers of religion! Christians of every name!* what object can compare in attractiveness and grandeur with the conversion of the people! In its presence how do the animosities and petty ends of contending parties dwindle into the veriest littleness! Let charity minister at home. Her task is everywhere the same, her object is one, and in promoting it every section of the church may realize a practical oneness. Such efforts would raise us all into the highest and holiest region of the Christian life and

teach us to find a common abode above the mists of prejudice and the din of controversy. No ordinary difficulties beset our path ; the object aimed at is as arduous as it is sublime ; the perfection of communities, as of individuals, is a prize reserved to recompense the most strenuous effort. We have to break the material fetters which centuries have slowly forged, to conciliate the harshest prejudices, assail the strongest habits, and resuscitate the flame of spiritual life from embers almost dead. And yet there is no occasion for despair. Only let all classes act as the present crisis demands, and we may rest confidently assured that ere long the fairest hopes of patriotism will bloom, that the rags of physical wretchedness will be exchanged for the garb of beauty, that vice and ignorance, superstition and unbelief, will finally be banished from our midst, and that we shall add to the enjoyment of every earthly good, the nobler privilege of being “a people whose God is the Lord.”

THE END.

A BRIEF STATEMENT
OF
THE PLANS AND OPERATIONS
OF THE
RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

INSTITUTED 1799.

TREASURER—JOHN GURNEY HOARE, Esq.

HONORARY SECRETARIES, { REV. W. W. CHAMPNEYS, M.A.
REV. EBENEZER HENDERSON, D.D.

PLAN OF SOCIETY AND EXTENT OF CIRCULATION.—The Society was formed to promote the circulation of religious books and treatises in foreign countries, as well as throughout the British dominions; and is conducted by a Committee, composed of an equal portion of members of the Established Church, and of Protestant Dissenters, annually elected at a public meeting of the Institution, in the month of May, among whom the greatest union happily exists.—The first year's circulation amounted only to 200,000 Tracts, in one language, and its total receipts were about £460. The Society has now either printed, or assisted in the publication of Tracts and Books in about ONE HUNDRED AND TEN Languages. Its annual circulation, including the issues from various foreign Societies, amounts to about TWENTY-FOUR MILLIONS; its receipts to £62,000; and its total distribution, to March 1851, to about FIVE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE MILLIONS of copies of its publications.

VARIETY AND CHEAPNESS OF PUBLICATIONS.—There are now about 4,743 publications on the Society's Catalogue. These works, commencing with the little Handbill, extend to a Commentary upon the Holy Scriptures, and even to a complete edition of the Bible itself, and are as varied in size and contents as the characters of those for whose spiritual good they are prepared. They include publications suitable for all classes of people, from the child of penury to the richest noble in the land.

THE SOCIETY'S GREAT RULE.—In the preparation of the Society's works, it is a fundamental principle, that every tract and book shall contain a clear statement of the method of a sinner's recovery from guilt and misery, by the atonement and grace of the Redeemer; so that, if a person were to read a tract, even of the smallest size, and should never have an opportunity of seeing another, he might be plainly taught that, in order to salvation, he must be born again of the Holy Spirit, and justified by faith in the perfect obedience unto death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINES PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.—To prevent the possibility of any misunderstanding respecting the nature of the Society's works, the Committee feel it necessary to state, that they clearly and fully set forth the important truth, that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings;" that being "justified freely, we are made the sons of God by adoption; made like the image of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; we walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, we attain to everlasting felicity." In publishing the truths of the gospel, the Committee adhere to the Holy Scriptures as the only, but sufficient standard of faith.

APPROPRIATION OF SUBSCRIPTIONS, DONATIONS, etc.—By a carefully arranged system in the concerns of the Depository, the sale of the publications is made to cover all the expenses of producing them, and of the necessary establishment of the

Society. Thus the whole of the subscriptions, donations, and contributions, is applied to the gratuitous circulation of its publications, without any deduction or charge whatever. The subscriptions to the Benevolent Fund of the Society in 1850-51 amounted to about £6,487, while its grants during that period were £3,563, being more than £2,000 beyond the receipts.

RELIGIOUS CIRCULATING LIBRARIES.—The Committee have supplied 3,421 LIBRARIES, at half price, to National, British, Parochial, Day and Sunday Schools, which were unable to pay the full amount. One hundred volumes have been selected for a School Library, which may be obtained by Schools of the above description for 40s., being about half the regular price of the books. Libraries of fifty volumes have also been selected. Of these Select Libraries 540 have been voted. The total grants of Libraries amount to 6,767.

FACTORY LIBRARIES.

It is computed that nearly two hundred thousand males, and more than that number of females, are engaged in the cotton, wool, flax, and silk factories of our country, besides those employed in other manufactures. As the larger portion of these bands are children and young persons under twenty years of age, who are thus withdrawn from the full benefits of school instruction, and exposed to many unfavourable influences connected with an early contact with the world, it is of the highest importance that efforts should be made for their moral and religious well-being. Among the means adapted for their good are small Libraries. That such is the conviction of many manufacturers, is evident from the fact, that selections of books are placed by them in their mills and warehouses, for the benefit of those in their employ. It is, however, believed that many have been deterred from such a course from the want of a small and well-selected collection

of books prepared for the purpose. With a view of obviating this difficulty, and extending in general an important means of doing good, the Committee have provided two sets of books—one adapted for males, the other for females—which they offer at the low price of ONE POUND each set, inclosed in a NEAT CASE. They may be obtained at the Depository, 56, Paternoster Row, and through the Booksellers.

LIBRARY FOR MEN AND BOYS.

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| 1. Alexander's Evidences of Religion. | 10. Philosophy of Common Things. |
| 2. Considerations for Young Men. | 11. Pious Mechanic.—Macdonald. |
| 3. Bunyan's Life. | 12. Redford's Great Change. |
| 4. Cranfield's Life. | 13. Prize Essays on the Sabbath, by Working Men. |
| 5. Dick's, Dr., Solar System. | 14. Robert Dawson. |
| 6. French Revolution. | 15. Self-Improvement. |
| 7. Lads of the Factory. | 16. Sherman's Guide to Acquaintance with God. |
| 8. Mirage of Life. | 17. A Volume of Tracts. |
| 9. New Testament Pocket Commentary. | |

LIBRARY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.

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